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Special Issue

No, This Is America: Interrogating Bad Faith Narratives, Epistemologies of Ignorance, Grammars of Violence, and Selective Racial Memories in a Post-Truth, Post-Shame, and Post-Accountable United States

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From the Editors

In this issue of *Professing Education*, the guest editors and authors expose, analyze, and question bad faith narratives in education and society and propose ways to continue to reclaim, reframe, and transform. In the words of the guest editors in their Introduction (Gilmore et al, this issue, p.6): "This *absurd drama staged around us* (Fanon, 2013), a theater of violence that no one deserves, prevents critical conversations in education and society, the acknowledgment of specific racial histories and oppressive structures, and a pathway toward collective reckoning and healing…we believe that addressing the insidious manifestations of bad faith is a compelling priority that is too urgent to ignore." The editors and contributing authors in the following pages offer important critical conversations, acknowledgements, and pathways toward collective reckoning and healing.

We thank lead guest editor, Amir Gilmore; guest editors, Stephany RunningHawk Johnson, Jeremiah Sataraka, and Veneice Guillory-Lacy; and the contributing authors for sharing their time and work.

--Mary Kay Delaney, Gretchen Givens Generett, and Paula Groves Price

Introduction from the Guest Editors
No, This Is America: A Theater of Bad Faith, Ignorance, and Violence That No One Deserves

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> *Where is that place where what should not 'happen to nobody' happens every day? Why is it that, in so many places found in every corner of the global space, so many human beings face that which 'no one deserves'?*
> —Ferreira da Silva (2009, p. 212)

> *You better understand White people's fantasies because tomorrow they'll be legislation*
> —Jared Sexton, invoked by Frank Wilderson (2020)

> *I have only one solution: to rise above this absurd drama that others have staged around me*
> —Frantz Fanon (2013, p. 153)

> *. . .they want me to remember / their memories, and i keep remembering / mine*
> —Lucille Clifton (2012)

> *This is America. Don't catch you slippin' now.*
> —Childish Gambino, *This is America* (2018)

The school shootings met with empty platitudes and "nothing we can do" attitudes.
Mass media, social media, and AI algorithms monetize hate and violence for "content."
A well-funded McCarthyist "culture war" against CRT, DEI, and LGBTQIA curricula.
Book bans, defunded libraries, teacher surveillance, and hostile school environment bills.
Criminalizing women and birthing people's access to reproductive healthcare.
The proliferation of "Cop Cities" after the alleged "Summer of Racial Reckoning."
Universities utilizing police power to curb free speech and civil disobedience to "restore order."
Another presidential election where voters must decide who is "the lesser of two evils?"
Discourses of "never again" are met with op-eds pontificating, "This is not a genocide."
Over one million COVID deaths and ecological precarity are the new normal.

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Wherever you are reading this from, what is to be said about *the land of milk and honey*? Ferreira da Silva's (2009) questions are rhetorical because that place of spectacularized and mundane mass violence, hate, extraction, expendability, inhumanity, and social suffering is here within the United States. What the U.S. is exceptional to is the remarkable ease with which these

violations are invoked, tolerated, refashioned, publicly justified, and met afar with condolences and naiveté by media pundits and politicians. Within this media-viral era of post-truth, post-shame, and post-accountability, their incredulous refusal to acknowledge the U.S' documented violent ideologies and iterations of settler colonialism, antiblackness, white supremacy, racial capitalism, heteropatriarchy, xenophobia, and ableism, perpetuates the assemblage of violence that has taken so many lives and continues to enshroud the country in its perceived innocence. Their refusals purposely misinterpreted these long-established death-dealing formations, boundaries, and enclosures as individual prejudices, irrational fears, and bad ideas that harken to a bygone era in the United States. This litany of violence *is not* a societal failure or a grave miscalculation that has voided the social contract because gratuitous violence *is* the normalized sociopolitical condition of the social contract—the vehicle by which civil society maintains economic expansion, white affect, authority, social order, and racialized and gendered hierarchies. These *grammars of violence* (Wilderson, 2020) are spatially committed to the systemic devaluation of lives—regardless of your profession, personal accolades, or adherence to respectability politics through interdependent institutional relationships, interactions, and policies. It only cares about putting you in your place—and the threat of violence is ready and real for any person who gets out of their subjugated place.

As such, devastation after devastation, crisis after crisis, and many minoritized and marginalized people, families, and communities live within a *guaranteed state of precarity* (Nxumalo et al., 2022). Contrary to what many (white) media pundits, lawmakers, academics, nonprofit leaders, and parents think, feel, or say about this country—*this is America*—a country where the descendants of white settlers who tried to replace Indigenous populations to become "Native," fear that they will be replaced—a country where white parents purport that their children are too young to learn about racism, anti-racism, social justice, and other "divisive" and "race-baiting" concepts, but are segregating water fountains in school (Fieldstadt, 2022)—a country where free speech advocates are harnessing juridical-political power to intrude and curtail the democratic ideals of academic freedom—a country where gun violence is unattributed to the public's accessibility to them, but a cultural affliction stemming from fatherless children and video games (Bradner & Zeleny, 2022) —a country where "child protection" means legislating and criminalizing access to reproductive and gender-affirming healthcare, "obscene" race-and gender-based content, and maligning anyone's belief in those values as "groomers" and "pedophiles"—a country where masking to mitigate the spread of an infectious disease was an extreme measure towards school safety, but the idea of arming teachers is not—a country where your school board campaign of being against school "indoctrinating" kids is upended by reading the curriculum (Schwartz, 2024)—a country where the politicization of your suffering, trauma, and death does not deliver justice, much less stop abuse, but is profitable for racist and anti-racists to monetize through lecturing circuits, media punditry, fashion apparel, nonprofit jobs, and voter mobilization (Yancy, 2021). *This is America, don't let them catch you slippin'*.

This *absurd drama staged around us* (Fanon, 2013), a theater of violence that no one deserves, prevents critical conversations in education and society, the acknowledgment of specific racial histories and oppressive structures, and a pathway toward collective reckoning and healing. This country's purposeful evasion of truth, choice, and responsibility to reconcile its oppressive histories and current societal ethos is mired in bad faith. As BIPOC scholars and guest editors of this special issue in *Professing Education*, we believe that addressing the insidious manifestations of bad faith is a compelling priority that is too urgent to ignore. Philosopher Lewis Gordon (1995) defined *bad faith* as anguishedly fleeing, "a displeasing truth for a pleasing falsehood" (p. 8). It is a social phenomenon

where truth is expendable, as people choose to deceive themselves and others to maintain their positive self-image and worldview or protect their feelings (Tichavakunda, 2021). With so many people in this country fighting an existential enemy that only exists within their fearful imaginations, bad faith becomes an act of self-preservation in rooted sophistry. Evidence, however rigorous, will not alter the bad-faith actors' belief in their worldview (Tichavakunda, 2021). Therefore, bad faith is grounded in people evading their agency, worldly responsibilities, and consequences of/towards critical inquiry, truth, and righteous action. As a *near-magical group denial*, civil society's collective bad faith is expressed, manifested, perpetuated, and maintained institutionally in societal belief systems and ordinary activities (Gordon, 1997). Despite evidence that proves otherwise, there is no shortage of bad faith examples in the United States (e.g., the 2020 Presidential Election, racial realism (Bell, 1992), COVID-19 infectious abilities, CRT in K-12 schools, transgender "social contagion," undocumented immigrants replacing the white electoral vote). Civil society's *epistemological ignorance* (Mills, 1997) and its self-evasion of agency, responsibility, and truth are the mechanisms that animate the violent structures of settler colonialism, antiblackness, white supremacy, racial capitalism, heteropatriarchy, xenophobia, and ableism. We argue that bad faith is the *thread that binds* the fabric of U.S. social relations. If civil society is entrenched in bad faith, then violence from this absurd drama will endure.

As a priority too urgent to ignore, we invoke Tichavakunda's (2021) pointed question, "How does one engage the irrational, persuade the illogical, or debate the incorrigible?" (p. 1) As a quandary permeating education and society, their question remains with us because it grapples with Fanon's (2013) notion of rising above the absurd drama, the theater of bad faith. *Can we rise above the drama through engagement? If so, how?* We ruminate on these questions to ask more questions, as minoritized and marginalized children's educational outcomes, well-being, and social worlds are affected. With routine marginalization, deriding, and erasure of ethnic studies within K-12 instruction, coupled with white fears, narratives, imaginations, and legislation politicizing and censoring the most difficult truths, what do children explicitly and implicitly learn (Eisner, 2002) about their role and belonging within the world? What are they not allowed to learn? (Milner, 2017) What can they infer about their own mattering and social worlds bearing witness to the banality of violence? As educators, what does social justice and accountability look like within institutions that do not exist or function within the interests of the oppressed? What does transformative political education and liberation look like outside of bad faith logics that foreclose our imaginative political capacities?

Despite a concerted effort to convince us that nothing can be done to respond to these crises, we as guest editors collectively invite you into this 12-article special issue of *Professing Education* to study how and why the oppressive structures of antiblackness, setter colonization, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, xenophobia, and ableism, are informed, operationalized, and machinated by bad faith. While this special issue will not provide immediate solutions that some may hope for (e.g., white racial consciousness-raising (see Samudzi, 2020), empty declarations of solidarity), it does provide a space for collective memories, scholarship, and embodied feelings as a corrective mode of truth-telling to expose the contradictions, hegemonic betrayals, and hollow neoliberal ideologies predicated in bad faith. We believe that through the study with/of our collective memories, scholarship, and embodied feelings, our dissonance towards the U.S.' grand narratives (read: selective memories) can aid us to rise above this absurd drama that surrounds us—even if momentarily.

Curating this special issue for *Professing Education* has been a challenging project but one filled with joy. Our special issues highlighted robust scholarship across the country, including the work of graduate students, elementary

education teachers, and early to senior career faculty. We organized the contributor's scholarship into five themes: (1) *Speaking Back to Bad Faith and Discursive Violence in Teacher Education*, (2) *Bad Faith and Classroom Injustices*, (3) *Media, Testimony, and Violence*, (4) *Moral Panics and Legislative Nightmares*, and (5) *Truth, Assimilation, and Progressive Mirages in Educational Reform*.

Theme 1 *Speaking Back to Bad Faith and Discursive Violence in Teacher Education* illustrates how, despite promoting transformative narrative arcs (Wilderson, 2020) of progress (e.g., multicultural inclusiveness, educational equity), teacher education programs are ungirded by bad faith by enabling and reifying LGBTQ exclusion and white racial domination through symbolic violent enactments of whiteness.

Theme 2 *Bad Faith and Classroom Injustices* explores the mundane anti-Black epistemic injustices (Fricker, 2009) that Black youth endure to gain an education in public schools.

Theme 3 *Media, Testimony, and Violence* highlights minoritized people and their testimonies that are distorted and structurally vulnerable to state violence through discursive practices in mass media and U.S. public culture.

Theme 4 *Moral Panics and Legislative Nightmare* examines the K-12 educational landscape of Florida and Texas in the wake of banning divisive concepts and "wokeness" after the coordinated assault on Critical Race Theory (CRT) and DEI.

Lastly, **Theme 5** *Truth, Assimilation, and Progressive Mirages in Educational Reform* troubles the notion of "truth" and "educational progress" by critically examining the assimilationist educational reform efforts of school desegregation in the Kansas City region and the global standardization of Western education through the Global Education Monitoring Report (GRM). These highlighted themes provide the framework for the articles' ordering.

Proceeding the introduction, the first article, entitled "You May Dispose of Us Easily, but this Question of White Racial Domination is Still to be Settled: Respectability and the Bad Faith of U.S. Teacher Education" by Brenda Harris and Cleveland Hayes II, examines the logic of bad faith through the duplicitous nature of teacher preparation programs that "vigorously promote multicultural inclusiveness and educational equity" and "ensure the continued White racial domination in schools and schooling" (Harris & Hayes, this issue). Using teacher education as a unit of analysis, the second article, entitled "'The Symbolic Violence of Whiteness in Teacher Education:' Death by a Thousand Words" by Cheryl Matias, investigates how the hope for racial justice in education is thwarted due to well-meaning and normalized symbolic violent enactments of whiteness. Using letters as a methodology to open a critical space for reflection and assessment for teacher educators, the third article, entitled "Clap Back: Schooling Teacher Educators" by Kristin Cipollone et al., challenged social justice teacher education programs' desires to adequately prepare classroom teachers, all the while evading its commitments to critical inquiry, truth, and radical action. Closing out the first theme, Bre Evans-Santiago's "Did you see me? A Conversation with Education Folks" uses poetry to create a conversation about the invisibility, erasure, and violence levied against BIPOC and Queer folx and which endure in the classroom due to current educational policies. They also "call in" administrators, community, and educator allies with action plans to foster inclusivity so that people are seen in all of their plurality.

Theme 2 begins with "Classroom Management as the New Jim Crow" by Shaylyn Marks. Marks' work asks to critically examine and reframe traditional classroom management practices because they possess Jim Crow-like undertones that disenfranchise Black youth and ensnare them in the school-to-prison nexus (Robbins, 2021). The sixth article, entitled "It's Been a Minute! Why teachers are still not equipped to disrupt linguistic injustice in the classroom" by Melissa Zipper explores the linguistic injustices (Baker-Bell, 2020; Boutte et al., 2021) that Black students experience and that the implementation of linguistic justice in school

and teacher preparation programs has failed because African American English (AAE) is "not recognized as a legitimate language in the field of education" (Zipper, this issue).

Theme 3 begins with the seventh article entitled "Resisting Grammars of Violence & Spectacles of Death: How Media Discursively Sanctions Antiblack Violence" by Chelsea Jimenez. Jimenez's work chronicles how forms of media—from slave advertisements to segregation signs to killings on social media—have been discursively used to push anti-Black animus, surveil Black people, reduce them to human capital, justify violence and death and cause them psychological suffering. The eighth article, entitled "Domestic Violence, Undomesticated Voice: Bad Faith Hermeneutics and Sacred Pedagogy in Queer Women of Color Life Writing" by Summer Sutton, explores the tension between life and writing when navigating the internalization and vulnerability to state violence and "the subversive epistemological force of decolonial pedagogies of selfhood" (Sutton, this issue). Working against a memoir's "susceptibility to a bad faith hermeneutic of transparent individualism," Sutton turns to the life writings of Machado (2019) and Gumbs (2016) to illuminate how public testimonies of domestic abuse disrupt "the private-public binary intrinsic to Western individualism" and "its harmful demarcation of the nuclear family as the primary form of community" (Sutton, this issue). The "messiness" of testimonies renders the self as "neither an individual free from community nor a mere victim of state violence but rather a creative spirit animated equally by communal histories and the idiosyncrasy of new life and perspective" (Sutton, this issue).

Theme 4 begins with Dilys Schoorman's "FL's legislative and educational nightmare: Responding to the multifaceted attacks on equity and excellence." Schoorman's work situates the political dynamics and intentions of Florida's bad faith legislative crusade against "wokeness," "not as an anomaly but as a national prototype" (Schoorman, this issue) for other states to follow. Moreover, Schoorman details the harm and confusion that this legislative assault has caused in K-16 education and provides education professors with recommendations on what they can do as a response. Moving from Florida to Texas, the tenth article, entitled "No, This is Texas: The Critical Race Theory Panic in Texas" by Clayton Jaskinia and Michael Boucher, used a qualitative case study to examine the "manufactured" panic of Critical Race Theory in Texas public schools. Their study urges teachers and teacher educators to avoid complacency in the face of authoritarian laws because, despite CRT's media attention, the teachers that they interviewed "did not have a deep understanding of the laws that have been created to silence them" and that teachers "unlikely to engage and defend their students against the erasure of their cultures and history" (Jaskinia & Boucher, this issue).

Theme 5 begins with article eleven, "A Tale of two Kansas Cities: 'Truth' is in the eye of the beholder" by Loyce Caruthers et al. The authors trouble the "selective memories" or national assimilationist mythologies about U.S. school desegregation by interviewing people who attended schools during desegregation efforts in the Kanas City region. Their research unveiled the nuanced facets of school reform via desegregation and the multiple truths participants had about it. In conjunction with this study, Caruthers et al. research highlights their experiences with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and how social, educational, and political sensitivities can selectively shape what counts as research and what is validated as knowledge in the landscape of school desegregation research. Our last article, "Indigenous Assimilation and Progressive Mirages: The Globalization of American Narratives of Educational Reform" by Madhu Narayanan, uses discourse analysis to examine how progress through modernity is a "mirage" because the settler colonial project of assimilationist education endures through globalization's flattened educational landscape. Narayanan compares the settler colonial notion of progress through assimilationist education, starting with the "rational" and bureaucratic

administration of education for Indigenous children through the Meriam Report to the recent 2023 UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM). The worldwide expansion of Western schooling as a hallmark of global homogeneity should worry us all because they "reinforce soothing narratives of the legitimacy of assimilative practices" and "reaffirm the social and economic status of dominant cultures, providing a narrative shape that rationalizes an unequal world" (Narayanan, this issue).

With this special issue on bad faith, epistemologies of ignorance, grammars of violence, and selective memories in a post-truth, post-shame, and post-accountable United States, we hope that the contributors' scholarship inspires others to examine the how and why motivations of bad faith, its structural manifestations, and to organize to dismiss the absurd drama that surrounds us all. The status quo must not remain.

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You May Dispose of Us Easily, but this Question of White Racial Domination is Still to be Settled: Exploring the Bad Faith of U.S. Teacher Education

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As abolitionist John Brown well knew (Earle, 2008), and suggested by this essay's title, to question the bad faith of patterned racism across U.S. society and its institutions is to put oneself at great risk for elimination, be it physical or social forms of exclusion, even death (Patterson, 2018). The title of this essay is a play on the last words of White abolitionist John Brown as he awaited the gallows in punishment for taking over Harper's Ferry, Virginia on October 21, 1859; the title references the bad faith in U.S. teacher education.

Pointing directly to the U.S. whitestream's bad faith claims of racial inferiority linked to and justifying chattel slavery, Brown contended, "You may dispose of me very easily. I am nearly disposed of now; but this question is still to be settled—this Negro question, I mean; the end of that is not yet."

Brown was convicted for treason; he went to his death denouncing bad faith manifested as racialized patterned inequities, and demanding guaranteed citizenship regardless of race or sex.

Presently, as in times past, few actions are surer to trigger violence than that of exposing systemic racism and the bad faith that authorizes it. White virtual mobs, dissatisfied students, conservative community stakeholders and bloggers, and internet conspiracy vigilantes today regularly use social media and electronic communications to intimidate and organize opposition campaigns against professors and others who call out systemic racism as bad faith enacted (Gray, Finley, & Martin, 2019). Often siding with assailants working to continue benefitting from and protecting the bad faith of systemic racism, White administrators are often complicit in realizing forms of professional and social "deaths" inflicted on the lives and professions of those they mark as disposable by applying their [seemingly neutral] institutional authority and enacting institutional procedures (Gray et. al., 2019). The high-profile attacks by White virtual mobs on Black scholars who critique systemic racism in higher education (e.g., Drs. Tommy Curry and Zandria Robinson) are cases in point (Finley, Gray, & Martin, 2018); they highlight the still to be settled questions of violence as acts of bad faith in higher education.

Examining Bad Faith and U.S. Teacher Education

The purpose of this essay is to examine how and why the logic of bad faith enables U.S. teacher preparation programs to vigorously promote multicultural inclusiveness and educational equity while simultaneously and forcefully working to ensure the continued White racial domination in schools and schooling, the seeming *diversity paradox* of U.S. teacher education (Juarez, Smith, & Hayes, 2008). For teachers to enter the classroom prepared to effectively teach all students, teacher educators must help future teachers learn to recognize and address the ways "race and racism negatively impact African American students [and other students of color] and their ability to successfully negotiate the school and classrooms" (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 211). However, despite widespread, consistent self-reports of successful multicultural teacher preparation across U.S. programs, teachers continue to enter the classroom best prepared to for classrooms reflecting the U.S. Whitestream.

The bad faith of U.S. teacher education's *overwhelming Whiteness* (Sleeter, 2001) limits endeavors to teach future teachers to question

processes or consequences of White racial domination and to address the legitimacy of students' culturally diverse backgrounds in teaching and learning. Much has been written about the negative implications and persistent, pervasive Whiteness of U.S. teacher education regarding educational equity and multicultural teacher preparation (Harris, Hayes, & Smith, 2019). Following Tichavakunda (2021), less examined is the usefulness of bad faith as a concept which enables more nuanced understandings of and opportunities to challenge systemic racism in the preparation of teachers for the multiracial realities of U.S. public schools by rendering visible the power and machinations of its logic linking practices and worldviews.

The dominance of Whiteness in U.S. teacher education endures through bad faith; how, then, does bad faith enable White racial domination to persist in the preparation of teachers? By examining how U.S. teacher preparation programs often participate in bad faith to buttress, rather than dismantle, its Whiteness, this essay highlights possibilities for interrupting and countering the logic tying together the narratives and practices of White racial domination in schools and schooling.

In turn, to examine the operationalization and machinations of bad faith in U.S. teacher education, we draw on a Critical Race Theory (CRT) methodology and analysis (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009). We create a composite story to highlight the modus operandi of bad faith its role in shaping and linking narratives, and the structural relationships of U.S. teacher education and its stakeholders to Whiteness, drawing on CRT's tenet of counternarrative storytelling. As part of our composite story, we use the respective third year official evaluations of two junior faculty teacher educators, one identifying as Black and male, and one as White and female, as representative intervenors (Love, 2004). Formal evaluations, public statements, and other practices enacted by typically White college and university administrators constitute important structural support to the functioning of the status quo in U.S. teacher education and higher education generally. We conclude by suggesting corrective, constructive measures to interrupt, counter, and address the bad faith of U.S. teacher education.

The White World of Education

In U.S. teacher education, particularly, still to be settled is the question of the bad faith preparation of teachers for the multicultural diversity of today's public schools (Harris, Hayes, & Smith, 2019). U.S. teacher education is a *White world* (Juarez & Hayes, 2010); future teachers, teacher educators, and other stakeholders are overwhelmingly White (National Summit on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2002).

Specifically, with teachers of color making up 20% of the profession (Carver-Thomas, 2018), compared to 50% students of color (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2022), teachers in U.S. public schools remain overwhelmingly White, female, primary English speakers (NCES, 2020) teaching growing numbers of students of color whom they typically prefer not to teach (Amos, 2011; Leonardo & Boas, 2021; Lindsay & Hart, 2017).

Teachers, pointedly, are key players in contributing to, or working against, the U.S. educational pipeline which continues to push out and fail whole groups of learners in schools (Johnston, D'Andrea Montalbano & Kirkland, 2017). Prepared by programs typically self-reported as highly effective, successful, "ahead of the curve", "premier" (Juarez, Smith, & Hayes, 2008), and excelling at culturally responsive teacher education (Au, 2017), predominantly White, primary English-speaking women teachers continue to exit their preparation programs best prepared to teach learners from U.S. society's Whitestream, not the demographically diverse students who increasingly inhabit classrooms (Ball & Tyson, 2011; Rodriguez, 2012). White educators tend to carry negative views and low expectations for learners from diverse backgrounds, preferring not to teach them (Barry & Lechner, 1995; Bell, 2002).

At the same time, contemporary U.S. public schools continue to damage, at times obliterate, the sustaining life approaches of minoritized learners and their communities despite democratic, inclusionary aims (Paris & Alim, 2017). Conditions in today's U.S. public schools are increasingly more apartheid-like in status, characterized by a predominantly White population of teachers, teacher educators, and other architects of schooling, and a coming, or already established, minoritized majority student population consistently underserved and pushed out of the PreK-16 educational pipeline. In 2005, Dr. Joyce King exclaimed, "The abysmal state of education for students of color in the United States is an inhuman situation that calls into question the values and pronouncements of Western 'civilization'" (p. 3). There have been no great reversals in inequitable schooling trends faced by minoritized learners in U.S. public schools and the and dominant Whiteness in schooling and teacher education since 2005, and to date, despite consistent egalitarian aims.

Indeed, public schools, teachers, and quality of teaching and learning are yet central to the educational outcomes, experiences, and opportunities experienced by learners (Ball & Tyson, 2011). From their inception (Spring, 2018), U. S. public schools have been viewed as one of society's valued, primary institutions dedicated to preparing educated citizens in a democratic society and to promoting equality among its citizenry by fostering upward social mobility for those citizens facing inequalities and thus leveling the playing field for all (Tyack & Cuban, 1997). U.S. public schools, however, have historically had both liberatory and oppressive functions; the textbook and the bullet have both been consistently used as weapons of choice in processes of White racial domination (Juarez & Hayes, 2012a).

Whether by way of textbook or bullet, the dominance of Whiteness in U.S. society, teacher education, public schools, and across the Whitestream is an expression of bad faith. Racism and oppression in all its forms are expressions of bad faith. U.S. teacher education thus is central to maintaining this patterned violence of race-based opportunity and outcomes disparities perpetuated by public schooling (Gist, Jackson, Nightengale-Lee, and Allen, 2019). By failing to effectively prepare future teachers to foster culturally responsive, quality, equitable schooling opportunities, experiences, and outcomes, teachers enter the classroom ill-equipped to identify, analyze, and take action to counter the social, political, and economic structures which create opportunity gaps and negatively influence learners' schooling and life experiences and outcomes to realize educational inequity instead of equity. The bad faith of U.S. teacher education, in turn, inhibits challenges to White racial domination and hence sabotages its potential to prepare teachers to realize educational equity. The battlefield of teacher education is fraught with dangers for those seeking justice in the preparation of teachers (Juarez & Hayes, 2012b; Matias, 2013; Matias & Mackey, 2016).

Connecting Bad Faith, White Racial Domination, and Schooling

What ties together these "strangely weird controversies" and "apparent contradictions" within a society that "proclaims equality, opportunity, and democracy as goals, while simultaneously brutalizing, degrading, and dehumanizing African Americans [and other minoritized groups] by every instrument and means of the culture" (Bond, 1968, p. 308)? Since 1619 and the landing of British ship with its cargo of at least two dozen Africans enslaved as chattel (Hannah-Jones, 2021), in John Brown's time, and at present as well, bad faith is the thread linking truculent sides of dissonant questions across U.S. society and its institutions, including its public schools. Those institutions, groups, and individuals acting in bad faith avoid reckoning with dissonant questions of minoritized disparities by avoiding "a displeasing truth for pleasing falsehood" (Gordon, 1995, p. 8).

Through bad faith with its emphasis on choosing pleasing falsehoods to avoid displeasing

truths, choice, and responsibilities, critical dialogue with potential to generate transformative, inclusionary possibilities for the preparation of future teachers is sabotaged and derailed. Bad faith likewise privileges deceptive, selective memory, lies, and distortions of truth thus buttressing the Whiteness of U.S. teacher education and obscuring more humanized paths forward. By exposing the logic of bad faith informing the Whiteness of U.S. teacher education, it becomes possible to address the challenges of naming Whiteness, and its corresponding harms to individuals and groups, by rendering visible, and then disrupting the sophistry which binds egalitarian ideals and lived racialized disparities and constitute the existing racial status quo.

Pointedly, the seeming diversity paradox which John Brown and others through the generations have protested is systemic racism authorized and permeated by bad faith. Systemic racism, and the processes of White racial domination which produce this historical, patterned privileging of Whiteness with its corresponding racialized exclusions, is an embodied, enacted form of bad faith.

Defined as a disavowal of all counterevidence which would challenge the existing racial hierarchy and its corresponding worldviews, bad faith is the sophistry and justification which enables the privileging of the interests, values, histories, and more associated with White people collectively at the expense of those of minoritized groups (Gordon, 1995). Bad faith refers specifically to the tendencies of individuals and groups to evade truth, responsibility, and choice by privileging deceptive, selective, distorted memories, lies, perspectives, and experiences, and thus insulate themselves from having to engage in any critical dialogue or take any corrective action (Gordon, 1999); it likewise has legal connotations used to describe intentionally dishonest acts committed within contractual obligations (Tichavakunda, 2021).

Bad faith prevents critical dialogue and action due to intentional, or otherwise, evasions of truth, choice, and responsibility and the simultaneous embracing deceptive, distorted forms of knowledge, memories, perspectives which support, authorize, and render respectable inequities-oriented self-images, interests, and worldviews including the historical privileging of Whiteness.

Whiteness, in turn, denotes the systemic privileging of the collective interests, values, beliefs, histories, and achievements of Whites. Similarly, respectability refers to an institutional form of Whiteness that emerges at the intersection of race and "middle-classness" (Davy, 1995) and "denotes a kind of hard-earned, as opposed to birthright, gentility" enacted in terms of civility and expressed as expectations, values, mores, morals, and assumptions that determine social propriety (Davy, 1995, p. 198).

By applying Whiteness as the bad faith standard of that which is defined as socially appropriate and acceptable and against which people of color are measured and distanced from, the institution of respectability becomes both a vehicle for maintaining and rationalizing White supremacy, the raison d'etre of White supremacy, and a venue where White supremacy is staged. Following Leonardo (2005), White supremacy is defined "as a racialized social system that upholds, reifies, and reinforces the superiority of whites" (p. 127). White supremacy is daily recreated and secured through bad faith as processes of White race-based domination, that is, "the acts, decisions, and policies that white subjects perpetrate on people of color" (Leonardo, 2005, p. 75). There are hence significant, negative consequences for individuals, groups, and institutions associated with allowing Whiteness in U.S. teacher education and the bad faith logic which justifies it to continue unchecked as patterned, race-based exclusions.

Critical Race Theory and Counter-Storytelling Methodology

If we are to trace the logic of bad faith and understand its connection to White racial domination and the Whiteness of U.S. teacher

education, we require a way to explore the relationship between the two (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Critical Race Theory, with its five tenets, centers the development and inclusion of voices and narratives which challenge racism and structures of oppression; as consistent targets of racism and oppression, minoritized peoples often develop a cache of insights and understandings, or experiential knowledge, about how racism and oppression function. Knowledge developed from the perspective of targeted by racism, rather than perpetuator of racism, is useful for exposing the logic of bad faith and how it justifies White racial domination (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

In particular, the second tenet of CRT focuses on the experiential knowledge of minoritized peoples which may be elicited from structured stories and storytelling. The stories and storytelling of those targeted by racism and oppression highlight the perceived realities of people and groups facing workings of racism and oppression (Knight, Norton, Bentley, & Dixon, 2004). These stories and storytelling, from the perspectives of minoritized groups and individuals, highlight the assumptions, contradictions, values, processes, and other mechanisms of Whiteness which operate to co-opt and subvert egalitarian aims and perpetuate the domination and subjugation of minoritized peoples and groups; they likewise expose the creative, resilient, even wily ways that minorized peoples and groups may employ to elude, challenge, and, or sabotage the workings of intersecting forms of Whiteness and oppression to promote their own humanizing survivance.

To create our composite counter story, we draw on a variety of data sources including our respective personal and professional experiences and those of colleagues and friends from minoritized backgrounds, those published as well as those shared informally, with a focus on experiences with challenging and being targeted by Whiteness. We also draw on traditional teacher education research as well as historical and literary sources, the arts and humanities, social and other sciences to create an interdisciplinary data foundation. Additionally, as we have noted elsewhere (Juarez & Hayes, 2014), we have included as data our extensive analyses of teacher preparation programs across the U.S. over two decades, including documents, mission statements, memos, meeting minutes and other written institutional sources as well as formal and informal individual and focus group interviews conducted as part of ongoing studies of multicultural teacher preparation. Pointedly, our composite counter-story is made up of characters and events based on actual individuals, events, places, and situations cobbled together to serve as a representative exemplar of how bad faith operates in relation to Whiteness and U.S. teacher education.

Setting the Scene: Introducing the Story and Storytelling

To present our counter-story, we use the literary device of a phone conversation between two teacher educators who are longtime friends and once worked together in the same public school district as middle school elementary school teachers; they likewise went to graduate school together and graduated one and then the other. That is, Malcolm and Gloria (i.e., characters in our counter-story) are meeting to catch up and have good conversation and good food.

Importantly, through Malcolm and Gloria, our counter-story follows Park-Fuller's (2000) use of autobiographical narrative performance to develop this essay's composite narrative. Park-Fuller (2000) defines autobiographical narrative performances as points within the composite storyline where the performer(s) typically speaks about acts of social transgression (e.g., racism) witnessed, experienced, or understood through intergenerational, collective wisdom. In speaking aloud these act(s) of social transgression, the telling of the story itself becomes a transgressive act—a revealing of what has been kept hidden, a speaking of what has been silenced—an act of reverse discourse that struggles with the (re) conceptions borne in the air of dominant politics (p. 26)."

An autoethnographic performance, furthermore, opens a space of resistance between the individual (auto-) and the collective (-ethno-) where the writing (-graphy) of singularity cannot be foreclosed. The authors, or speakers sharing the story simultaneously appeal to and debunk the cultural traditions the storytelling act itself is helping to redefine through the acts of speaking, sharing, and understanding. Through the performative writing of our personal stories expressed in the composite story, we choose to literally give our bodies to the narrative both internally and externally by connecting the inquiry, process, and product (Buzard, 2003; Danzak, et.al, 2021; Upshaw, 2016).

Malcolm, a main character in this essay's composite story is one of the two teacher educators highlighted in this narrative. He is the son and grandson of three generations of public schoolteachers. He identifies as African American and male. He grew up in the American Deep South.

Gloria, the second main character and the other of the two teacher educators highlighted in this essay's composite story, is a first-generation college graduate. She was born and raised in the Midwest, then transplanted to the American Deep South, about 100 miles from Malcolm's hometown. She identifies as White and female; Gloria dreamed of becoming a schoolteacher throughout her childhood.

Both Malcolm and Gloria work at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). While Malcolm has worked in teacher education in the Midwest as well, he currently works at a small private college in the American West, Inland College. Although Inland College is a PWI, it is also designated as a Latino Serving Institution (HSI). While Inland College profits from serving a larger number of Latinx students, the students themselves do not receive many financial or curricular benefits. Malcolm's students have already earned bachelor's degrees when they begin their teacher preparation programs.

Gloria, in turn, works at a state-sponsored university located in the American Deep South. Baxter University is situated in a mid-sized city wherein 54% of the city's population identifies as Black while the university's student body population is 18% Black. Most of Gloria's students are first generation undergraduate college students who commute into campus from the surrounding urban region.

Malcolm and Gloria respectively completed their terminal degrees from a large university located in the Intermountain West. The program they graduated from is justice-centered and focuses the educative potential of minoritized histories and collective wisdoms. They both typically only teach social foundations, multicultural education courses required in their respective teacher preparation programs.

Below, Malcolm and Gloria introduce the bad faith acts of social transgression they face in their daily work as teacher educators serving as the lone faculty members responsible for teaching their respective programs' sole multicultural course for future teachers. The bad faith acts typical of U.S. teacher education expressed through the dialogue of Malcolm and Gloria highlight the logic and machinations of Whiteness functioning to simultaneously sustain official support for and claims of excellence in multicultural teacher preparation while consistently acting, interacting, and making decisions aimed at ensuring the continued programmatic White racial domination.

Colleagues Talking Shop on the Phone: Sharing Experiences of Facing Bad Faith

Gloria: I'm so glad you have a minute to catch up, Malcolm. It's hard, painful work trying to prepare future teachers for the realities of schools today and their role in working against or perpetuating educational inequities. Our White students are often so shocked to learn that inequities in schools still exist; and, of course, most of our students are White….women…and primary monolingual English speakers. Yet, I do believe that it is the White faculty members we work with who may be the harder ones to

engage, if one is serious about effectively preparing future teachers for today's diverse classrooms.

Malcolm: For sure. It can feel lonely, even frightening, to be the only one talking about the violence and traumas associated with Whiteness in schools and society. Future teachers often presume that the trauma learners face is only at home with families in minoritized communities.

No! What about the curricular and other forms of violence and trauma learners are subjected to in schools every day?

But you are right….engaging faculty in teacher education is hard too—maybe harder than working with future teachers. Do you remember when I had to tell one of my colleagues that she doesn't get her Good White People Medal (Hayes & Juarez, 2009)?

Gloria: I sure do! I think of that incident because of how regular those types of encounters are in teacher education. For example, I thought of it when I was responding to a colleague who asked me for my evaluation of a film intended for viewing by future teachers as a model of exemplary teaching. My feedback was taken as thanks, but NO THANKS and ignored when I pointed out the film's White Savior orientation, deficit narratives about minoritized learners, and erasure of White racial domination.

Note this—my colleague justified his rejection of my feedback by name dropping and calling out the works of widely known culturally relevant pedagogues (e.g., Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings and Dr. Geneva Gay). You know me—I had to throw an Audre Lorde (1997) moment on him to tell him he can't just thumb through Black scholars' work…the scholars he name-dropped most certainly don't ignore racial disparities. [Sighing….]

Malcolm: Let me guess! Your words and time were wasted. Your colleague showed the film anyway, correct?

Gloria: Of course. [Laughing] I wanted to snatch that Good White People Medal that moment.

Soooooooo….speaking of faculty, do you know that I am on a hiring committee this semester? I wondered what was up when I saw a matrix of my peers' top choices for interviews being almost completely the same across the board.

Malcolm: That is weird. Why did they all pick the very same people? Did they work on it together?

Gloria: No. We each reviewed the files independently and generated our top choices separately before coming together to discuss.

Malcolm: So how did that happen?

Gloria: Once I started reviewing the files, I saw the pattern. Our committee's matrix of top choices for interviews was a list of people who were just like our faculty….they were all White, mostly women, but some men, they attended the same universities as many of our faculty members now did, they are even from the same areas as most of our faculty.

Malcolm: Wow! So obvious. Your hiring committee created a matrix of top choices for interviews literally in their own White image.

Gloria: So true. We are recreating ourselves in our own White, middle-class, primary English speaking, Christian, heterosexual image. So much for being serious about diversifying our faculty. We have our token scholar who is our representative of minoritized groups, but that's all we intend to hire, apparently.

Malcolm: Gloria, have you completed your annual faculty review with your Department Chair yet?

Gloria: Yes. I don't think I'm going to make it through my third-year review for my contract to be renewed. It wasn't good….The other day my

Department Chair passed me in the hallway and, after looking at the article I had printed out and was holding in my hand, he made an observation that I don't think was a compliment.

Malcolm: I hear you. I just received my official third year review letter. I also had an interaction with one of the faculty members here who is a Full Professor. He is my mentor. Let's send each other our reviews. I'm interested in what you think about mine and I want to see yours.

Gloria: Yes! Let's exchange reviews right now. You know how it goes—you won't be super surprised. As we have said before, we are both "too Black and not Black enough" (Juarez & Hayes, 2012)!

Malcolm: Indeed: I am too Black [physically] for [White] people and they seem uncomfortable around me. Yet, I'm not Black enough [culturally] for [White] people when I fail to enact their version of what a Black man should be.

Gloria: Exactly. And for me, I am too Black [culturally] for [White] people because of my focused efforts to enact loving Blackness in all that I do as a counter to the over-privileging of Whiteness across U.S. society's social spaces. At the same time, I am not Black enough [physically] for [White] people because I am presumed to be mismatched phenotypically for loving Blackness, an approach to living considered by the whitestream to be a definite racial wrong if committed by someone identified as White and thus an act to be policed and the so-called wrong do-er penalized.

Malcolm: [Referring to Mrs. Carnell Brown, exemplary Black educator from Mississippi:] As Mommie used to say, "If you know for yourself, the teacher [or your Boss or whomever] can't tell you, 'I'm sorry. You're lacking three points to get it correct.'….if you know for yourself that you're right, then they can't tell you that" (Harris & Hayes, 2019, p.56). To Mommie's point, we can not---NO! we *must* not depend on any stakeholders steeped in bad faith in teacher education or elsewhere to define us, our worth, or our work. Bad faith, anti-Blackness, and Whiteness go back a long way (Smith & Harris, 2023).

After finishing their phone conversation, Malcolm and Gloria send their official third year reviews and written communication to each other via their personal e-mails. Like their phone conversation, the act of sharing their third-year reviews help both Malcolm and Gloria to counter negative emotional and other social and professional consequences that come with living through an experience as the target or object of bad faith acts of social transgression. The official third-year reviews and communications which Malcolm and Gloria share with each other specifically embody the bad faith acts of social transgression which they have each been subjected to as faculty members of U.S. teacher preparation programs.

Malcolm's Official Reviews and Communication Emailed to Gloria

> *He has received mixed feedback on course and internship evaluations. Many students appreciate his hard work and enthusiasm for understanding racism and diversity. Others find the process too uncomfortable to benefit from the experience. Malcolm has reflected on this and worked with faculty mentors to modify instructional approaches. Malcolm is also learning to communicate with peers regarding his beliefs about social justice in ways that allow others to understand and profit from his point of view*. (Official Third Year College Review Letter, 2008)

> *Malcolm….I know that you are incredibly angry. Believe me: We all know that. It is always extremely apparent how you feel. I personally perceive you to be an angry Black Supremacist—if there is such a thing. And, I have to keep*

> *asking myself, what would I do if you were a White Supremacist instead? And my answer is always the same: anger will not change anything. It never has; it never well."* (E-mail correspondence from Colleague who identifies as White and male, Fall, 2009)

Gloria's Official Reviews and Communication Emailed to Malcolm

> *She knows a lot about cultural diversity, and she is very outspoken….She receives some of the best student evaluations in the department and college and some of the worst. Consistent with past evaluations, students often couch a negative comment within an otherwise positive comment saying that the workload is heavy and that she uses 'shock and awe techniques' which include the use of profanity…She has been advised to continue to evaluate her teaching practices to ensure that she meets the needs of all of her students.* (Official Third Year Departmental Review Letter, 2010)

You [Gloria] *are definitely the most radical one here.* (College Administrator, identifies as White and male, Spring, 2010, Annual Faculty Review Meeting)

In the phone conversation of Malcolm and Gloria, from the above composite story, the everyday bad faith practices and their toll on faculty members are exposed. While none of the colleagues that either Malcolm or Gloria work with appear in any way to be anti-inclusionary, anti-multicultural in their viewpoints or attitudes, the perpetuation of Whiteness in U.S. teacher education is assured. The hiring practices, daily conversations, and other decision-making, actions, and interactions referred to by Malcolm and Gloria in their conversation expose how their pleasing attitudes and official support of multiculturalism are linked together with their practices ensuring the continuation of White racial domination through bad faith; particularly in the case of White administrators, institutional authority is drawn on to promote affirmative multicultural goals while enacting practices that in bad faith ensure that White people will remain in charge of the preparation of teachers and the interests, values, histories, and viewpoints of White people will continue to be privileged.

The epigraphs above, in turn, feature representative snapshots of the third-year official reviews of both Malcolm and Gloria. These official reviews and communications are likewise exemplars of bad faith operationalized within U.S. teacher education.

Particularly, bad faith mobilized in teacher education as acts of social transgression are rendered visible with Malcolm and Gloria identified as "passionate" and "knowing a lot about cultural diversity"; these evaluations of "passionate" and "knowing a lot about cultural diversity" are pleasing perspectives and evaluations applied to Malcolm and Gloria respectively by the administrators of their preparation programs. Linked to these pleasing official evaluations of Malcolm and Gloria are the displeasing, negative, official assessments applied by the program administrators to them as being outside of respectability, not respectable---an *angry Black Supremacist,* and a *profanity-using Radical*.

This pleasing-unpleasing official framing respectively of both Malcolm and Gloria positions them as nearly, but not acceptable and sufficiently ignoble as to make [inferred White] people around them uncomfortable (e.g., White students and colleagues). Indeed, this bad faith act of social transgression against both Malcolm and Gloria links the pleasing, official support of multicultural teacher preparation in the form of their acknowledged respective great knowledge and commitment to preparing teachers for today's diverse classrooms with the displeasing assessment of them as not respectable contributors, too culturally diverse-centered, to prepare future teachers. In short, the bad faith acts of social transgressions enacted against Malcolm and Gloria set them up for professional failure by expecting them to teach multicultural teacher education in ways that do not prepare

future teachers for today's diversity and, most importantly, do not disturb White people or Whiteness.

Malcolm and Gloria are likewise confronted with the harms of bad faith realized through its *grammars of violence* (Wilderson, 2020) expressed through immediate and threatened violence (e.g., official evaluation, communication, reprimands, mentoring, possible barriers to career advancement, even job loss). Advised to modify their [displeasing] teaching approaches toward [pleasingly] more harmonious, comfortable [for Whites] pedagogies to better meet the needs of *all* learners, Malcolm and Gloria are thus constrained, silenced, and hindered by bad faith in teacher education; Bad faith in teacher education successfully prevented Malcolm and Gloria respectively from initiating or participating in critical conversations, teaching, and other endeavors aimed at naming specific racial histories and the oppressive structures and processes of domination which sustain bad faith and limit possibilities for pushing toward collective reckoning and healing.

Bad faith in U.S. teacher education is therefore the thread connecting "the seeming diversity paradox of multicultural teacher education and its connection to the White world of education" (Harris, Hayes, & Smith, 2019, p. 2). Bad faith is embedded within and enacted through the belief systems, language and everyday activities which constitute the daily business of teacher preparation; it is operationalized as these belief systems and practices at once work to promote and eradicate social differences from the Whitestream.

Existing racial hierarchies in schooling and society are buttressed by bad faith as its constitutive apparent contradictions allow, even encourage, individuals and institutions to evade the unpleasant consequences of choices, responsibilities, and historical truths regarding demographic, educational inequities. Favored instead are self-affirming worldviews declaring widespread, successful preparation of teachers for culturally relevant, sustaining, and equitable teaching. Institutional policies, procedures, interactions, and relationships sustain bad faith in teacher education through violence and threat of violence, as in the cases of Malcolm and Gloria, and function to push toward and remind teacher educators [and others] of their "place", role, and responsibility to maintain the White world of education and the dangers of challenging its betrayals, contradictions, and other sources of suffering inflicted on society's vulnerable populations.

A[nother] Beginning: Settling the Bad Faith of U.S Teacher Education

By using a composite story and autoethnographic performance, our aim in this paper is to seek to work toward settling the question of respectability and bad faith in US teacher education. Using the tenets of CRT, we consider ways in which the bad faith of Whiteness in the preparation of teachers can be interrupted.

First, the question of bad faith can begin to be settled in teacher education programs by understanding that systemic oppression and White racial domination are an endemic part of American society; Whiteness permeates teaching and learning throughout K-12 and teacher education, including diversity courses. The permanence and permeance of Whiteness play out in a variety of ways as we have shown in the introduction of this paper and our conversation. By definition, social diversity courses in teacher education underscore the lack of multiculturalism and existing Whiteness in teacher education (Juarez & Hayes, 2014; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Mensah & Jackson, 2018).

To identify, then interrupt, and redirect the ways that the logic and machinations of White racial domination operate through bad faith requires an ability to expose how Whiteness functions to deny issues of race and racism. It likewise requires an ability to expose the persistent racial practice of refusing to consider the everyday realities of race and racism. The question of bad faith in teacher education can be significantly challenged by requiring future teachers (and teacher educators) to successfully

complete coursework in Ethnic Studies, for example, and/or Women's Studies, as well as courses in sociology, which center analysis of cultural norms, knowledge, and practices that challenge the hegemony of Whiteness in U.S. society. These programs and courses focused on challenging the hegemony of White supremacy came into existence for the purpose of remedying the historical over-privileging of Whiteness (Hu-DeHart, 1993).

In turn, to recognize racism's pervasiveness requires White administrators, and others who function as gatekeepers and protectors of White dominance in teacher education and other important social venues, to be intentional and courageous in assessing their own practices, attitudes, decisions, and other interactions complicit in upholding systemic racism; they must name the contours of racism and their role in maintaining White racial domination—actions many are unwilling to do, and if they are willing, they do not know how to proceed toward more inclusive, equitable ways of being. Instead, these stakeholders often believe, sincerely to be sure, that they aren't acting in racist ways or contributing to White racial domination because, for example, they may have voted for former U.S. President Barak Obama in 2008, and again in 2012, despite simultaneously aligning themselves and their actions with and toward the interests and furthering of the historical privileging of Whiteness (Bergerson, 2003; Dei, Karumanchery and Karumanchery-Luik; 2007; Gillborn, 2005).

Second, the question of bad faith can begin to be settled in teacher education by understanding that there is no such thing as colorblindness; in fact, colorblindness is not an appropriate ideal for social justice, and one would think that all that happened in the world with all of the anti-CRT bills and the anti-1619 project and book banning related race that these programs know colorblindness is a myth. According to Bergerson (2003), White people typically attribute negative stereotypes to racially minoritized peoples while at the same time attributing the resistance of minoritized peoples to "reverse racism". This can be seen in any social foundations of education, multicultural course across U.S. teacher education (Hayes & Juarez, 2009). Teacher education candidates [and White teacher educators] yet regularly query, "Can't we just teach? I don't see the color of my students" (Juarez, 2013, 2014). Little do these future teachers know that only in a racist society would it be a good thing not to see what you do see. Furthermore, when White liberals fail to understand how they can and/or do embody White supremacist values even though they themselves may not embrace racism through this lack of awareness they support the racist domination they wish to eradicate (Gillborn, 2005; hooks, 1989).

Third, the question of bad faith can begin to be settled in teacher education by understanding that merit is problematic in the United States. All we must do to see the problematic nature of merit is to look at who is in leadership and serves as faculty across teacher education programs. Now, some may read this and make the argument that on their campus, this is not the case—their programs are led by individuals from minoritized communities. While there are exceptions, by and large, teacher education remains a White World (Juarez & Hayes, 2014). It is not enough to say that anyone who works hard can achieve success. Merit operates under the burden of racism; racism thus limits the applicability of merit to people of color (Bergerson, 2003).

Fourth, the question of bad faith can begin to be settled in teacher education by understanding the role that experiential knowledge plays in the discourses of people of color. When teacher education programs are unwilling to recognize the knowledge of students and faculty of color as legitimate and critical to the way they navigate in a society grounded in racial subordination, they deny the humanity of these individuals and constrain their experiences and opportunities despite their inclusive intentions. This posturing toward democratic participation is what Hytten and Warren (2003) call *appeals to authenticity*. In their model, when White faculty cite their own experiences to

counter or contradict the voices of those minoritized as Not White, this serves to undermine the experiences and insights of minoritized peoples and define their perspectives as less valid and less useful.

Lastly, the question of bad faith can begin to be settled in teacher education by understanding the property value of Whiteness (Harris, 1993). Whiteness was invented and continues to be maintained to serve as the dominant and normal status against which racial Others are measured. Whiteness serves to make these Others less privileged, less powerful, and less legitimate. Until the racial power of Whiteness is not only recognized but also explicitly addressed in U.S. teacher education programs, it is highly unlikely that the democratic intentions of educational equity and social justice will be realized in the classroom.

Indeed, with contemporary U.S. society's Whitestream prohibitions against naming race when teaching about the 1921 Tulsa, Oklahoma Race Riot, the so called "don't say gay" and anti-Critical Race Theory legislation, and call to look for the "silver lining" of chattel slavery, for instance, bad faith is seemingly unbounded; it appears literally still quite easy to dispose of any whom, like John Brown, persist in calling out bad faith and naming dissonant questions of inequities still to be settled. The need to call out and work against bad faith in teacher education, schools, and schooling thus not only persists, it remains urgent.

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The Symbolic Violence of whiteness[1] in Teacher Education": Death by a Thousand Words

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Abstract

Per Bourdieu (1991/2003), language has discursive practices that reifies power in symbolically violent ways. Such violence can be found in how teacher education operates, especially within the overwhelming presence of whiteness (Sleeter, 2001). That is, daily practices, rhetoric, and even wording in educational policies within teacher education, though well-meaning and normalized, can oftentimes become forms of symbolically violent enactments of whiteness. Notwithstanding this, this conceptual paper uses a Critical Study of Whiteness to investigate how might symbolic violence operate within the hegemony of whiteness, using teacher education as a unit of analysis. Methodologically, Allen's (2021) critical race hermeneutics (CRH) provides an interpretative method that critiques the "ontological presence of white supremacy" (p. 22). In the forever hopes for racially just teaching this paper critically interprets how might seemingly normal operations within teacher education be manifestations of violence, which, if left intact, thwarts the hope for racial justice.

Keywords: Whiteness, Teacher Education, Bourdieu, Symbolic Violence, Race, Racial Justice

Introduction: Normalizing Violence and Violence in Normalcy

Amidst police brutalities disproportionately targeting Black and Brown people (see Gilbert and Ray, 2016; Waldron, 2020), mass shootings and violence against Asian Americans (see Ho, 2021; Tesla et al, 2020) and a global pandemic that resulted in increased death tolls in communities of Color across the U.S. (See Fortuna et al, 2020; Garcia et al, 2020; Garcia, 2020;), violence against people of Color has become normalized. Or, similar to Wozolek's (2020) argument that there exists a hidden curriculum of violence towards women in domestic violence and queer youth in heterosexism, so too is there a hidden curriculum of violence on people of Color. In fact, like the violence towards women, the violence towards people of Color is so commonplace that it is rendered, per Wozolek (2020), nothing but "violence-as-normal" (p. 14). On social media alone the flippant sharing of police brutality as some kind of litmus of one's antiracist activism has become so prevalent that this slacktivist approach (see Cabrera, Matias, and Montoya, 2017) is oftentimes called sharing in on trauma porn (see Trott, 2019 for parallel argument). Sadly, such practice is as if the violence and trauma of people of Color is not only under-recognized but, when finally acknowledged, becomes nothing more than public performances that satiate the bloodthirsty hunger of a voyeuristic white audience. That the struggles of people of Color are but mere *telenovelas* for armchair antiracist activists is a sad reality of U.S. society. Yet, what about education? Does said violence play out in schools? Is not education, particularly, K12 schools, a safe haven that shields children from violence? Though there has been a rise in mass school shootings such that

[1] The author deliberately lowercases whiteness to thwart the inherent whiteness is in English grammar that renders whiteness, whites, or white supremacy as proper nouns-worthy of capitalization--and all other racial categories such as Black or Brown not. As such, unworthy of capitalization and proper noun status."

students and teachers alike are taught the run, hide, fight protocol for active shootings, the idea that violence inside the classrooms, especially violence by teachers towards students, is ludicrous. In fact, the oft trope for those wanting to become teachers is that their desire to become teachers is rooted in a profound love for children. If that is so, how then can such love ever be violent? Or, perhaps, is said love actually a true one?

The idea of love and teaching has been around a long time. Take for example, Darder (1998) who relates Freirean principles to teaching, claiming that teaching as an act of love must come from "A love that could be lively, forceful, and inspiring, while at the same time, critical, challenging, and insistent" (p. 2).

Corroborating Darder, Nieto (2003) argues that teaching as love means recognizing that the entire profession is nothing but a "vocation based on love" (p. 37). To Nieto (2003) "Love, then, is not simply a sentimental conferring of emotions; it is a blend of confidence, faith, and admiration for the students and the strength they bring with them" (p. 37-38). Thus, the idea of teaching and love are as inseparable as peanut butter and jelly; for parceling one out would render it an entirely new concept. However, inasmuch as love and teaching are quite simply a thing, there still exists lovelessness in teaching that is violent to students of Color. Bettina Love (2019), for instance, argues that teachers, many of whom are white, lack love for Black students simply because they cannot love those who they know not of. That is to say, it is not only ignorant to deny the racism Black students face daily, but also dangerous. And, in presenting this danger to Black students they simply cannot be loving to them. Johnson et al (2019) echo this sentiment proving the disconnect of teachers who proclaim they love their Black students, yet, in the end, still do not show them the love. Instead, as Johnson demands, teachers need to have a revolutionary love that acknowledges African Diasporic literacy, histories, and identities. Matias (2016) extends this argument claiming that beyond the idea of love, teachers who refuse to interrogate their own whiteness are actually abusive, and within this abuse, create the condition by which students of Color learn to hate themselves. Clearly, the love so often professed about by teachers is not felt by students. This is dangerous because if love is solely defined by those who claim its expression, then we negate the testimony of how that expressed love is felt by others. Meaning, the definition of love relies solely on teachers who claim to be loving regardless of how that love is felt or received by students. In doing so, the voice of students, many of whom are of Color, are silenced. Within this emotional manipulation is violence. In fact, there is a latent violence that manifests in the field of teacher education that, if not explored, will remain; a process that ultimately harms students of Color. And, in refusing to voyeuristically observe this violence like mass society has done for so many other brutalities, teacher education needs to 1) learn how to bear witness to said violence and 2) intervene. For those who sit idle whilst violence occurs is as culpable to the crime as those who perpetrate.

This theoretical paper investigates the violence in teacher education, particularly, symbolic violence found in the common parlance of teacher education like proclaimed love. Per Bourdieu (1991/2003), language has discursive practices that reify power in symbolically violent ways. Shannon and Escamilla (1999), for instance, decry how symbolic violence targets Mexican immigrants in U.S. schools claiming, "the negative sanctions necessary to enforce an English-only policy exemplify the symbolic violence that Bourdieu (1991/2003) talks about" (p. 349). Inasmuch as symbolic violence can be found in the educational practices of bilingual students or Black high school students (see Coles and Powell, 2018), it too, can be found in how teacher education operates, especially within the overwhelming presence of whiteness in teacher education (Sleeter, 2001). That is, daily practices, rhetoric, and even the wording in policies within teacher education--ones which are also replicated throughout society--though well-meaning and normalized, can oftentimes become

forms of symbolically violent enactments of whiteness. Notwithstanding this, this conceptual paper seeks to answer *how Bourdieu's (1991/2003) symbolic power, particularly intermixed with the power within whiteness, plays out in the daily operations of teacher education in ways that become symbolically violent to teacher educators of Color and teacher candidates of Color committed to racial justice?*

Theoretical Framework

Although Bourdieu's (1991) theorization of language as symbolic power is primarily applied throughout an analysis on rhetoric, discourse, and ideologies, so too can they be applied to the rhetoric, discourses, and ideologies embedded in teacher education (more discussed below). But lacking within that analysis, is how such issues of symbolic power play a role in race relations. To assuage this, I apply critical theories of race. Particularly, a critical study of whiteness. Unlike some studies on whiteness that transfix on reporting white racial epiphanies, a critical study of whiteness is preoccupied with revealing how whiteness harms people of Color (see Matias & Boucher, 2021). In fact, the tenets of a critical study of whiteness are as follows:

> *1) Avoid drawing from a white epistemological standpoint…*
> *2) Give scholars of Colour their due. We call on all scholars to wholeheartedly engage with the work of scholars of Colour, to go beyond simply acknowledging that scholars of Colour originated whiteness studies with in-text citations …*
> *3) Going beyond white racial epiphanies. The narrow focus on 'helping' whites realise their own racial consciousness can be self-indulgent because it overlooks how whiteness impacts people of Colour…* (p. 66).

In doing so, the interconnectivity between how whiteness is expressed matches with how it is felt. Much like the differing opinion of how love is expressed as opposed to how it is felt aforementioned above, applying a critical study of whiteness provides the framework for which whiteness is not only identified but also connected to the racial microaggression of another. As such a critical study of whiteness provides a great framework for how to unveil that interpellation between whiteness and racial harm.

Returning to Bourdieu (1991), the idea that language holds symbolic power is proven by how it regulates ritualistic discourses. Much like any other institution in any given society, teacher education also has ritualistic discourses, like love and care, which need a deeper understanding of how said love and care, and other practices within teacher education, can be symbolically violent. Meaning, much like the MAGA hat whereby liberals are quick to take notice that the words, "Make America great again," has symbolic violence behind the seemingly innocent terms, so too can teacher education's consistent use of emotions be symbolically violent. That said, both Bourdieu's theorizations of language as symbolic power and a critical study of whiteness provide a critical analytic lens to better excavate the latent racial power and racial violence embedded in discourses often accepted as normal in teacher education.

Methodology

The oft trope in the study of whiteness is understanding the normality of how it operates. Meaning, how seemingly natural whiteness plays out in society and, in particular, in teacher education. Though such an idea is nothing new, especially since Sleeter (2001) has revealed the overwhelming presence of whiteness in teacher education, the quandary remains as to how and why does whiteness continue to pervade teacher education in ways that appear as if it is business as usual. To assuage this, I strategically opt for a methodology that provides a different interpretation to the modus operandi of teacher education; one which operationally makes visible the invisibility of whiteness. That is, "the ideologies that we have available to interpret white supremacist realities and imaginaries are most often normative, functionalist ones that distort," (Allen, 2021, p. 23) creating a condition where one can bear witness to racial reality, but

are denied testimony of that reality due to the "white diss-course" (see Matias, 2016) that disrespects such reality. Meaning, one remains silent on Truth because a power structure strategically silences it while normalizing delusions. Therefore, an interpretive methodology that reveals not only the power structure of race but also the social psychoanalytic dimensions that subvert racial reality by virtue of the hegemonic dominance of white supremacy must be employed.

To respond, I apply a theoretical methodology of critical race hermeneutics (CRH) because CRH "embraces a racial conflict theory, which imagines that society was, and continues to be, formed out of continual racial group conflict, in particular, the attempts of those racialized as white to actively dominate others and re/produce an unjust racial hierarchy" (Allen, 2021, p.20). Fortuitous is this approach, in that in its application, the seemingly benign presumptions about race in teacher education are debunked and, in their place is a criticality that more closely interprets how whiteness and white supremacy continue to operate as a dominating hegemony within the structure of teacher education. Additionally, the psychoanalytic dimensions of whiteness and white supremacy are also interrogated within CRH because CRH focuses on how "white supremacist ideology shapes the unconscious" (p. 22). That is, instead of just providing a critical interpretation of how whites are vying for racial power within a given structure, CRH also "re-symbolize repressed concepts, emotions, and memories, forming more insightful consciousness about racial realities" that were previously gaslit by whiteness (p. 23). Herein lies the greatest benefit of applying CRH. Revealing power structures through interpretation is meritorious, yet more curious to understand is how power structures become normalized and operationalized even when those structures are, in and of themselves, incongruent with ideals of freedom, liberty, and humanity. How is it we, as a society, allow for this? Or, as Foucault (1979) once argued, why do we participate as vehicles of power so that racial hegemony is maintained?

The beauty then of applying CRH is that inasmuch as theoretical scholars apply critical theoretical methods to reveal the racial hierarchies in education or society, they do so under the very ivory towers that model such racial hierarchies. Instead, as Allen (2021) argues, folks and institutions that hegemonically reify white supremacist ideology "prefer that People of Color produce qualitative narrative about racial strife so they can have an 'Aha!' moment about the racial Other" (p. 29). This is tantamount to teacher education programs agreeing, almost seemingly attracted, to include culturally relevant/responsive/sustaining teaching, multicultural education, and applying funds of knowledge. In their quest to do so, they focus on the narrative, knowledge sets, and histories of the racial Other while never asking why it is that they are othered in the first place. All this false racial attraction is done while maintaining the overwhelming presence of whiteness in teacher education. Meaning, no such identification, let alone, interrogation of white supremacist ideology, whiteness, or the emotionalities of whiteness are had. In fact, they are ignored, overlooked, and oftentimes dismissed as irrelevant. Perhaps, as Allen argues "what they seem to fear are insightful structural interpretations of their favored subjective forms of representations, ones that falsify paradigms they find ideologically pleasurable, and constitute what they imagine to be their white selves" (p. 28). Thus, by using CRH this paper strategically provides that critical racial interpretation so needed to reveal the seemingly everyday transactions of whiteness in teacher education and education writ large.

Analyzing with Bourdieu's The Social Institution of Symbolic Power with CRH: Revealing Symbolically Violent Teacher Education

In *Language & Symbolic Power* (1991/2003) Bourdieu discusses four elements within the

social institution of symbolic power. They are as follows: (1) Authorized Languages, (2) Rites of Institutions, (3) Descriptions and Prescriptions, and (4) Censorship and the Imposition of Form. In it he warns readers that social science must grapple more deeply with words stating, "but on a deeper level theft must examine the part played by words in the construction of social reality" and how those very words can contribute to "all class struggles…classes defined in terms of age, sex or social position, but also clans, tribes, ethnic groups or nations" (p. 105). That is, social science words are not simply written, spoken, or read without power. Indeed, they hold power. Take for example racial microaggressions (Sue et al, 2007). They are but daily, sometimes subtle, racial insults that harm people of Color regardless of the intentions of the insulter. Therefore, racial microaggressions are nothing but insults and, per Bourdieu (1991/2003) are as follows:

> *Insults, like naming, belong to a class of more or less socially based acts of institution or destitution through which an individual, acting in his own name or in the name of a group that is more or less important in terms of its size and social significance, indicates to someone that he possesses such and such property, and indicates to him at the time that he must conduct himself in accordance with the social essence which is thereby assigned to him* (p. 105-106).

In short, insults, whether intentional or not, are nothing but words used to manipulate a social condition.

For example, the use of the word "boy" to an African American adult man is, in and of itself an insult, strategically used by the insulter, to put this Black man in his place by infantilizing his personhood. And, if spoken aloud in front of others (let's say white children), the socialized beings quickly learn where their social location stands in approximation to said Black adult man. In the case of white children, they quickly learn that the power structure of whiteness puts them on par with a Black adult man. Meaning, because the symbolic power structures of white supremacy allow whiteness and antiBlackness to reign supreme, it will then force people of Color, and Blacks in particular, to the "bottom of the well" (Bell, 1992). Plainly, language is not benign and nor could it be in a field replete with whiteness like teacher education. In order to ferret out the symbolic violence of whiteness in teacher education I strategically employ critical race hermeneutics (CRH) to each social institution of symbolic power within teacher education to offer a racial interpretation of how teacher education operates.

Authorized Languages

In Bourdieu's analysis of the symbolic power within language he relates back to the fact that power is not simply embedded in words alone, but also embedded within who is the speaker of such words. He states, "…the use of language, the manner as much as the substance of discourse, depends on the social position of the speaker, which governs the access he can have to the language of the institution, that is, to the official, orthodox, and legitimate speech" (Bourdieu, 1991/2003, p. 109). As such, the speaker, and where that speaker is socially located within said society, are of relevance here too. Furthermore, as much as the speaker and their social location are relevant, so too is who the speaker is speaking to and their social location. Per Ahmed (2004), racial interpellation occurs between the two bodies. Meaning, the social interactions between two beings. Or, as Yancy (2008) offers with his extensive analysis of the elevator effect whereby a white woman clutches her purse upon the presence of a Black man entering, what matters is the interpellation between (1) the two bodies and (2) the two social locations that each body represents. Take the aforementioned example. If the speaker was a white man labeling a Black man, "boy" then what must be accounted for is not only both of their racial identities but how white supremacy and whiteness socially locates the white man in power over the Black man. This creates a stilted relationship whereby the speaker assumes power over the Black man simply because, like Bourdieu states above, the white man governs the access to the official language of

whiteness. For if the Black man were to switch it up and call the white man, "boy" there would be hell to pay. Simply put, like a racial microaggression that only occurs unidirectionally, authorized languages are giving the speaker authority in a unidirectional manner.

Furthermore, Bourdieu (1991/2003) argues that there is a precarious relationship among the speaker, his social location, and the "symbolic capital of the group" that assigns his social location (p. 111) which, providing ideal conditions, renders the speaker as an "authorized representative" (p.111). In a white supremacist state that elevates whites to rights and legitimacy above those of people of Color, whites occupy a higher social location than people of Color, and, in doing so, whites have more access to authorized languages than their counterparts. Additionally, Bourdieu writes,

> *But perhaps the most important thing to remember is that the success of these operations of social magic--comprised by acts of authority, or, what amount to the same thing, authorized acts--is dependent on the combination of a systematic set of interdependent conditions which constitute social rituals*. (p. 111).

First, the social magic, with which Bourdieu (1991/2003) talks is "rooted in the capital which the group has accumulated through its efforts and whose effective use is subordinated to a whole set of conditions" (p. 111). In a white supremacist world, whites have the rooted racial capital to question "Where I am really from" (due to my obvious racialized phenotypes that are not white). However, when I refuse to accept a white person's answer of "Ohio" and push further with "No, where are you really from? Ireland?" it becomes preposterous simply because whites have a set of conditions, otherwise, per Bourdieu (1991/2003), a social magic, whereby whites have the authority to question my roots without ever questioning their own. In these "*rituals of social magic,*" (p. 111) qua Bourdieu, the authorized representative from the authorized institution holds the authorized language. That is, whites become the authorized representative from a white supremacist institution and thus, white discourse (see Matias, 2016), colorblind racist discourse (see Bonilla-Silva, 2006), or white rhetoric (see Nakayama & Rizek, 1995) becomes the authorized language. This interdependence that Bourdieu (1991/2003) talks of stems from a multitude of things. As described above, the speaker versus the receiver, the speaker's social location versus the receiver's social location, and the social magic that conditions both of their locations. The interdependence does not stop there. The complexity also relies on the discourse to be understood and recognized as authority. "This recognition--whether accompanied by understanding or not--is granted, in the manner of something taken for granted, only under certain conditions, namely, those which define legitimate usage: it must be uttered by the person legitimately licensed to do so…" (p. 113). That is, when I push back on white rhetoric (the authorized language within a white supremacist institution) to a white speaker (the authorized user) by insisting they must come from outside the United States like Ireland (in the same manner they do to me when I say I am from Los Angeles) they laugh because such discourse is illegitimate in a white world. Simply, white authorized language is unidirectional and de-legitimizes any attempt to push back on its usurped authority.

Let us apply Bourdieu's (1991/2003) notion of authorized languages into the field of teacher education which has been proven to be inculcated with the hegemonic power of whiteness (see Sleeter, 2001, 2016, 2017). Like mentioned above, common rhetoric in teacher education is that people join the field because they believe themselves to be *altruistic*, that they *love* and *care* for children, or that they have a

sentiment of wanting to *give back*[2]. Those sentiments are unquestioned and received on a base level of understanding particularly because the speakers are mainly white women (authorized speakers) in a white woman dominated field (authorized institution). Yet, to apply CRH to those sentiments, I offer a different interpretation: is it altruism or a need to feel like a savior, don't pedophiles also love children, and what have you wrongly taken for said communities such that now you want to give back to them? To even bring up those quandaries is almost sacrilegious simply because that rhetoric of whiteness (authorized language) in white dominated teacher education (authorized institution) has been embedded for so long they go without contestations (rituals of social magic). Essentially, who am I (the only person of Color in the room) to question the presumed innocence behind the rhetoric of whiteness in teacher education? Like Bourdieu states, it is not just about the speaker but also their social locations and their approximation to each other. In this case, those social locations are also their racialized white identities in a white supremacy society that often allows whiteness rhetoric to go unchallenged. Their racialized white identity is then juxtaposed to my identity as the (then) first ever professor of Color in an urban teacher education program. The issue of white racial power to that of my racialized identity as a Brown, skinned Pinay was felt.

In fact, I tested this presumed authorized language years ago when I showed the YouTube clip of MadTV's "Nice White Lady." Though the clip is a satire pushing back on the readily accepted rhetoric that states all white women must do to be a good teacher is be nice, my white teacher candidates were enraged; as if the notion of even questioning their niceties was blasphemous. Or, that niceties are in and of themselves enough to be a good teacher. As described above, why would one readily accept if someone is actually nice despite their announcements of being so, without even asking those who supposedly received her "niceties?" If scholars of Color like Valenzuela (1999), Johnson et al (2019), and Love (2019) continue to demand authentic love or care, otherwise be nice, then what is *presumed* as niceties may not actually be so. Finally, when one accepts this absurd ritual of social magic, otherwise, where hegemonic white emotionalities reign supreme, and consequently, also accepts the authorized language of white rhetoric spoken by authorized speakers like white women it is as Bourdieu writes, a "collapse of a world….it is part of the disintegration of an entire universe of social relations of which it was constitutive" (p. 116). Simply put, bending the knee to whiteness rhetoric as an authorized language in teacher education will not only continue to produce inept teachers for racial justice, which ultimately becomes symbolically violent to their K-12 students, it simultaneously obliterates the intellectualism and professionalism we so seek in the preparation of teachers.

Rites of Institutions

Often described as rites of passage, rites of institutions is Bourdieu's term because this terminology better accounts for the socialization of institutions. Meaning, rites "tend to consecrate or legitimate an *arbitrary boundary*, by fostering a misrecognition of it as legitimate; or…they tend to involve a solemn transgression, i.e. one conducted in a lawful and extra-ordinary way, of the limits which constitute the social and mental order which rites are designed to safeguard at all costs" (p. 118). To translate Bourdieu, rites are socially constructed as much as race is. They are not benign nor can one expect them to be free from "the power they possess to act on reality [and] by acting on its representation" (p. 119). Since institutions are legitimized and authorized within power struggles to create arbitrary boundaries (otherwise, binaries in race, gender, class, sexual orientation) they essentially "can

[2] Italicized for emphasis since these "buzzwords" are always used in teacher education

create difference *ex nihilo*….by exploiting as it were the pre-existing differences" (p. 199-120). Since CRH seeks to reveal the rites and institutions of whiteness, which is oftentimes obscured within the normalization of whiteness, it becomes a fortuitous method to apply here. If the rites of institutions are racialized in ways that allow whites to behave, think, act, and speak in ways that reinforce arbitrary racial categories out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), then we must question those very aspects we take for granted as normal.

Furthermore, Bourdieu (1991/2003) overlays gender to the rites of institution to demonstrate how they can not only create differences, but also legitimize them. They assert, "The most important effect of the rite is the one which attracts the least attention: by treating men and women differently, the rites *consecrate* the difference, institutes it, while at the same time instituting man as man, i.e. circumcised, and woman as woman, i.e. not subject to this ritual operation" (Bourdieu, 1991/2003, p. 118). Simply put, the operations of the rites of institution literally create binaries (e.g., white or nonwhite, man or woman, have or have not, straight or gay, able or disabled, citizen or alien, etc.). Further, the consecration of these binaries is "…to sanction and sanctify a particular state of things, an established order…" (p. 119) and this order is maintained by coercion, punishments, and surveillance. Essentially, the rites of institution create a social order that is nothing but "…a 'well founded delusion' a symbolic imposition but *cum fundamento in re*" (p. 120). Therefore, when applying CRH, the very idea of being white, which has material benefits (e.g., land, employment, generational wealth, education, slaves, voting, etc.), is essentially founded on delusions, much like the field of Eugenics and its misappropriation and its manipulative use to justify Blacks in slavery.

Within the context of teacher education these rites of institutions of whiteness play out so readily that they often go unnoticed. Take, for example, the commonplace procedure to invite master teachers (in-service teachers who mentor pre-service teacher candidates), supervisors (often retired classroom teachers), principals, and teacher education faculty to interview new teacher education applicants. Because the rites of institutional whiteness are so deeply embedded in the everyday social order, one can easily overlook the fact that a majority of these invitees are white themselves and have white cultural and racial upbringings (see Thandeka, 1999), white diss-course--racially coded talk that in the end disrespects people of Color--(see Matias, 2016), white epistemology (see Teo, 2022), etc. In this presumption of whiteness as neutral, racially biased comments about teacher candidates of Color surface in those interviews without recognition of its biased nature. In my experience as a teacher educator for almost 20 years, I have witnessed comments such as the following:

Comments	In response to..
She's just rough around the edges	A Black teacher education applicant's expressing passion for racial justice in teaching
She doesn't seem like a good fit	A Latina teacher education applicant's vociferous explanation of teaching in urban communities of Color and her honest critique of white K-12 teachers in her own experience
She looks unprofessional	A teacher education applicant of Color wearing traditional ethnic wear
She doesn't sound professional	A Black teacher education applicant's codeswitching from mainstream American English to Black English
She's such a great candidate	A teacher education applicant who exemplifies typified white customs, behaviors, and rhetoric

Though these comments were seen as benign to the many master teachers, principals, teacher educators, and supervisors, they were not. CRH and its recognition of how whiteness and white supremacy operates indefinitely, acknowledges that these comments are indeed racial insults, which cuts deeply when acknowledging that teacher education is bleeding out in diversity. In one institution I was told that the selection of teacher candidates into the program was akin to a sorority rush, picking out only mirror images of the big Soros. By acknowledging the rite of institutional whiteness inside teacher education, no one should be surprised that the field is still predominated by white women. Inasmuch as Noguera (2003) argues that under a racist, capitalistic educational system, urban schools are designed to push out poor students of Color, so too can such a strategic maneuver happen in reverse. Meaning, if the rite of institutional whiteness within teacher education reifies whiteness, almost coddles it at times, then it will continue to cater to white teachers whilst pushing out potential teachers of Color. This is the kind of symbolic violence that manifests in teacher education. Despite teacher education's proclamations about caring for cultural diversity, cultural responsivity, or cultural sustainability, it clearly denies why such cultural inclusions are needed in the first place. Meaning, what is the existing condition, or per Bourdieu, what is the rite of institution within teacher education such that it now claims to need cultural inclusions? Perhaps, teacher education needed cultural inclusions because it never had it before. In short, denying the rite of institutional whiteness in teacher education only further entrenches whiteness in the everyday, seemingly routine procedures and practices within teacher education. And, in doing so, continues to push out teacher educators, teachers, and teacher candidates of Color.

Descriptions and Prescriptions

Bourdieu (1991/2003) warns us that "there are, no doubt…in which the structuring power of words, their capacity to prescribe while seeming to describe and to denounce while seeming to enunciate, is so clear" (P. 128). That words have power to describe and prescribe are not novel. In fact, the "power of words" is common parlance. Yet, what is not oftentimes considered is from whose perspective are such words of description or prescription from? For that matter, which descriptions and prescriptions are given credence? Because words come from an authorized language, by an authorized speaker, in an authorized rite of institution they are embedded within complex power dynamics. By extension, describing and prescribing words are enmeshed in that same complex power dynamics. For how an authorized language gets authority (qua the speaker, the rites of institution, etc.) is just as complex as words to describe and prescribe. Because "words, slogans, and theories which help to create the social order by imposing principles of di-vision and, more generally, the symbolic power of the whole political theatre…actualizes and officializes visions of the world and political divisions" words are--to borrow from the band Extreme's song title--more than words (Bourdieu, 1991/2003, p. 130). As such, describing and prescribing words carry power because they define the social order of the world and "We know that the social order owes some measure of its permanence to the fact that it imposes schemes of classification, which, being adjusted to objective classifications, produce a form of recognition of this order…" (Bourdieu, 1991/2003, p. 127).

Furthermore since "dominant individuals favour the consensus, a fundamental agreement concerning the meaning or sense of the social world" (Bourdieu, 1991/2003, p. 130-131) any contestations to that social world are considered, qua Bourdieu, heretical discourse. Meaning, "any attempt to institute a new division must reckon with the resistance of those who, occupying a dominant position in the space…have an interest in perpetuating a doxic relation to the social world" (p. 130). Herein I apply CRH and its underlying premise of how whiteness operates hegemonically in ways that will always sustain a

white supremacist state. In a white supremacist society, whites then are the dominant group, and, as the saying goes, the victors write history. Hence, the issues we have with Eurocentrism in education. Essentially, by controlling the discourse whites also control the description and prescription of the racial order; ergo, they hold the power.

Take for example, the New York City Central Park situation where Amanda Cooper, a white woman, verbally accosts Christian Cooper, a Black man of no relation. Upon politely asking Amanda to please leash her dog--a rule in the Ramble area of Central Park and posted on signs--she gets belligerent. In the video she appears angry, aghast, and appalled that this Black man had the audacity to impose any sort of power over her by telling her what to do. At first Amanda violently hurls harsh words to Christian demonstrating her as an authorized speaker of an authorized language from a rite of institutional whiteness. However, after calling the police on Christian, Amanda then masterfully changes her words to describe the situation, falsely claiming she is the victim and Christian, a Black man--one in which she repeatedly mentions knowing the racial order--was threatening her life. Though unstated, her prescription, or forced recommendation, is for police to engage in police brutality; a commonplace practice in a white supremacist state. In fact, in 2020 when this incident occurred, racial tension was nationally heightened by the murder of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor--two Black Americans who died due to police brutality. To take from Bourdieu's (1991/2003) line of questions, "How can one fail to see that a prescription may have a role not only in the author's intentions, but also in the reality of its social realization…a performative representation capable of exerting a specifically political effect of consecrating the established order…?" (p. 134). Or, more poignantly, with the help of CRH, "How can one fail to see that in a white supremacist world, whites feel authorized enough to enforce the white racial order?"

Applied to teacher education this control over white descriptions and white prescriptions becomes symbolically violent to those who believe in racially just teaching simply because whiteness is so normalized in teacher education that any contestations to that establish racial order is, as Bourdieu suggests, deemed heretical discourse. The heretical discourse of racial justice becomes so loud that whites who engage in hegemonic whiteness in teacher education are unable to silence the discourse as many have done before. That is, "Dominant individuals, in the absence of being able to restore *silence of the doxa*, strive to produce, through a purely reactionary discourse, a substitute for everything that is threatened by the very existence of heretical discourse" (Bourdieu, 1991/2003, p. 131). Take, for example, the ideas of cultural responsivity (Ladson-Billings, 1995), cultural relevance (Gay, 2018), and today's cultural sustainability (Alim & Django, 2017), all of which were developed for teachers, who are predominantly white, to better support K-12 students of Color. Though initially conceptualized to push back on hegemonic whiteness within the K-12 teaching force, I have witnessed white teacher educators say that we, faculty, also need to be culturally responsive to teacher candidates--students training to be teachers, many of whom are white, which ultimately negatively impacts teacher candidates of Color again (see Navarro et all, 2022). First, this misappropriation steals the intention away from the intended recipients or, as Bourdieu calls, the dominated class. In this case, this class is students of Color. Then, by erroneously substituting its intention for whites without any acknowledgement of the existing racial order, it therefore consecrates the rite of institutional whiteness. To be clear, all curricula, pedagogies, and texts in teaching and teacher education have already been culturally relevant to whites only, hence the need to finally include culturally relevant teaching for folks of Color. So, it

becomes ever so redundant to *Columbus*[3] the intentions behind culturally relevant teaching. In the end, this is just one way whites within teacher education find ways to make the relevance culturally white again. That, in and of itself, is symbolically violent to teacher educators of Color, teacher candidates of Color, and all students of Color.

Censorship and the Imposition of Form

The final social institution of symbolic power is censorship and the imposition of form. Bourdieu's (1991/2003)description of censorship "is the structure of the field itself that governs expression by governing both access to expression and the form of expression…" (p. 138). That is, censorship is not simply conceptualized as the mere silencing of one's voice. Instead, censorship is about how the entire context is governed by power, particularly those who have power to access authorized voice and what authorized language shall be spoken. Metaphorically, that is tantamount to rigging a soccer game if the rules, ways to win/lose, and access to who can or cannot play are governed by another. Eerily, the control of it all is no different than living in the movie, Hunger Games; always being manipulated by District 1. However, unlike the movie, "censorship is never quite as perfect or invisible as when each agent has nothing to say…[because]… he is, in a way, censored once and for all, through the forms of perceptions and expression that he has internalized and which impose their form on all his expression" (Bourdieu 1991/2003, p. 138). Much like forcing a non-native speaker to express their views and feelings in an authorized language that dominates that given society, not only is the censor about the mere act of being silenced, but also being forced to express in an internalized medium that is not authentic to one's own being. Take for example, the derogatory Tagalog/Filipino phrase, "*bahala na*.[4]" The literal translation to English means, "to let go and give it to God." In American custom, dominated by Euro-Christian religious values, the oft trope of "giving it to God," or "letting God take the wheel" is often used with deep reverence, exuding one's devoutness to the Christian faith. However, for Filipino speakers, *bahala na,* is not used with such reverence, despite the Philippines being a Catholic stronghold. Instead, its usage connotes the exact opposite. Meaning, that phrase is oftentimes used as the ultimate swear phrase against another person; closer to "fuck this" than "let God take the wheel". The Tagalog expression is more of an exasperation that connotes a deep disgust of the targeted person, or their behavior, so much so that they want nothing to do with the person. They literally wash their hands of that person. In Filipino collective society, family and community is everything. Therefore, to utter I rid myself of you is the ultimate dig. To prove a point, saying "fuck this" to Filipinos in a traditional Filipino cultured society would not hold the same weight nor would saying, "*bahala na*" in an English dominant culture. Inasmuch as literal translations are not enough to appropriately express oneself between multiple languages and contexts, so too is the ability to express and how one expresses themselves in racial contexts.

CRH ferrets out the oft hidden curriculum behind expressions, censorship, and impositions of form. A classic example of this is Lee Mun Wah's (1994) documentary, "Color of Fear." After listening to an Asian American man, Black man, and Latino explain why they have to always honor their cultural and racial identities because those same identities have never been accepted in white America, white David persists in asking why they can't just call themselves Americans. Black David calmly responds, at first, in an expository way (white discursive speech patterns); knowing this is the acceptable form of expression when talking to whites about race. See the transcripts below.

[3] American colloquialism that loosely translates to take that which is not even theirs in the first place.

[4] My apologies if my usage of the phrase offended anyone.

Black David: There's a way in which America and white and human become synonyms. That's why we can't just treat each other as human beings. To me, when I hear it from a white person, it means why can't we just all pretend to be white people? I'll pretend you're a white person and then you can pretend to be white.

White David: (begins to physically and audibly chuckle)

Black David:…Why don't you eat what I eat? Why don't you drink what I drink? Why don't you think like I think? WHY DON'T YOU FEEL LIKE I FEEL?! GOD DAMNIT I'M SO SICK AND GODDAMN TIRED OF HEARING ABOUT THAT. I'M SICK OF THAT. THAT'S WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN BEING TO ME. THAT'S WHAT IT MEANS TO BE TO BE WHITE. THAT'S WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AMERICAN. WHY DON'T YOU COME THE HELL OVER HERE? THAT'S WHAT I HEAR EVERY GODDAMN DAY. AND YOU KNOW I CAN'T COME OVER THERE. YOU KNOW THAT THIS SKIN AND THIS HAIR AND THE WAY THAT I TALK AND THE WAY THAT I THINK WILL NEVER EVER GET INCLUDED BECAUSE I'M UNPALATABLE TO THIS GODDAMN NATION. I'M UNPALATABLE. YOU CANNOT SWALLOW ME. YOU CANNOT TASTE ME. YOU CANNOT BE A GENTLEMAN BECAUSE YOU DO NOT WANT TO. YOU THINK THAT YOU CAN SURVIVE WITHOUT ME BUT you can't man. And you think (pretending to be a white man) that hey it'll all just be fine when we just treat each other like human beings. And what that says to me is DON'T BE YOURSELF, be like me. Keep me comfortable. Connect where I am ready to connect. Come down to my place or maybe I'll come down to yours and get some artifacts from your place. Uh uh, that is bullshit! (CAPITALS to emphasize screaming).

After this speech Black David hunkers in his chair, crossed legged, and breathing deeply as to calm himself back down. As a teacher educator, I've shown this clip in my teacher education courses and in my whiteness course. When I ask students to respond to the film the responses are almost routinely starkly different. In my whiteness course students express how they feel empowered. That Black David "getting real" with white David is inspiring, necessary, and, though really uncomfortable, my white students in this course argue the need for whites to learn how to bear witness to this expressed hurt. These particular students, however, have self-selected to take this elective course or take it for the mandatory ethnic studies master's pathway: inclusive of all races. Meaning, respecting the fact[5] students in this class were interracial, their disposition, epistemological stance, or who they perceived themselves to be as students were aligned with a willingness to learn about race, racism, white supremacy, whiteness, and more specifically, white emotionalities. On the other hand, teaching the same issues about race, racism, white supremacy, whiteness, and white emotionalities in a mandatory diversity course within a teacher education program had starkly different responses. Again, the rite of institutional whiteness inside teacher education is so commonplace that challenging its stronghold--like within mandatory diversity courses--is oftentimes met with hysterical resistance (see Gonsalves, 2008). Upon showing the same clip, the responses I overheard were negative, claiming that Black David needs to learn "how to express himself appropriately" or that this display of "anger" was "off putting." The classes focused on sympathizing with white David and spoke at great

[5] I purposely use this phrase because oftentimes popular speech uses "Despite race, creed…" Instead of fixating on the negatives of our differences I opt to push back on this commonplace discursive pattern and offer positive alignments to differences such as "with respect to," "honoring the different experiences in race, creed…" or "in respecting."

lengths about what it feels like to be presumed racist and that, that hurt alone, substantiates why they do not feel safe to talk about race with people of Color. Never did they bear witness to the hurt Black David expressed as constantly being denied access to a white world. It was a strange cooperation of the racialized hurt people of Color feel under racism and white supremacy (see Matias, 2016). Even more odd, was that since it was a teacher education course and the students were preparing to become urban specific teachers, most of them began discussing culturally responsive teaching; using the buzzword as a litmus of their socially just intentions. But instead of talking about the radicalness of teaching cultural responsivity or relevance with urgency to undo racism for Black and Brown students--for which they were intended, they spoke about it in ways that understood it as teaching Black and Brown[6] students to have better ways of communicating. Essentially, they wanted "colored" expressions more palatable to their white cultural norms. The descriptions and prescriptions of the same clip were indisputably different not because of race; for there were white students in both courses.

What was different was the context from where the students hail. The whiteness course was a mandatory course for a master's program that had an ethnic studies track or can be taken as an elective for education and ethnic studies. The mandatory diversity course was a prerequisite for other courses in a teacher education program. Just like that, the rite of institutions, what constitutes authorized languages, or who is consecrated as authorized speakers, and how those factors influence the descriptions and prescriptions are of grave importance. Because, as Bourdieu suggests, in recognizing the social institution of symbolic power, we can see how it impacts how one censors and imposes. For the first class did not censor Black David, readily bearing witness to his grievances to better understand the inter-dynamics of racialized emotions, nor do they impose another form to convey the same message. On the other hand, the second class with its overwhelming presence of whiteness (Sleeter, 2001, 2016, 2017) presumed its self-righteousness, or qua Bourdieu, its authority to censor Black David--completely disregarding, even denying, the message of hurt and pain. Or, as Bourdieu states of dominant classes, "their primary function is to deny" (Bourdieu, 1991/2003, p. 149). Furthermore, these white teacher candidates ideologically impose upon their future Black and Brown students a form of discourse that they find socially acceptable in the white racial order. Simply, students of Color are expected to bark, like trained dogs, in a manner that is socially acceptable to white teachers; lest they be canceled like Black David. Herein lies the symbolic violence because such actions force "its addressees [to] treat it the way it demands to be treated, namely with all due respect" (p. 153). Meaning, as these students downplayed Black David, they imposed their white racial power by "*put*[ting] *in the wrong* anyone who attempts to *reduce* it to its objective truth" (italics original, p. 153). In the refusal to acknowledge this, teacher education then continues to ponder why students of Color might operationally feel like "*bahala na*" to schooling (see Matias, 2016b).

A Challenge and A Conclusion: Death by a Thousand Words

As teacher educators our commitment and passion to improving education, specifically with the well preparation of teachers, are undeniable. We would not have put ourselves through K-12 teaching, a master degree, and a lengthy doctoral degree to earn less as an Assistant Professor than a ten-year veteran K-12 teacher for nothing. Yet, we must be honest with ourselves. This task is impossible if we continue to leave intact ideologies, practices, and discursive practices that

[6] I purposely capitalize Brown to indicate the need to formalize other racial groups and give it proper noun status.

in the end are symbolically, emotionally, and I would say, spiritually violent to people of Color. Forgoing surface leveled recommendations, the challenge I suggest is to find ways to unveil the racial institutions of symbolic power inside teacher education in ways that made what was once normal, seem foreign and what was once outside, within. For example, if teacher educators and teacher candidates are negatively reacting to clips like MadTV's "Nice white Lady" then instead of decrying that approach, embrace it. Ask the hard question as to why that clip makes us so uncomfortable? What are the underlying ideological presumptions that, when exposed to different ways, makes us feel uncomfortable? How might our adherence to comfort and the enforcement of standards, norms, and routines be symbolically violent to others? In the end, it is not just about doing unto others as you would want done because what you want done may not be the same path for others. Though seemingly simple, empathy is still one of the hardest traits to teach and if one cannot find themselves to have racial empathy for those who are transgressed by the symbolic violence of whiteness, then they should reconsider their role in teacher education. Because if they refuse to acknowledge how their words, mentality, and actions might cut people of Color, then they choose to put us to death by a thousand words.

Special Note: To Teacher Educators everywhere, May your actions follow your words.

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Dr. Cheryl E. Matias was recently awarded the 2020 Mid-Career Award for her work on racial justice in teacher education at the premier organization, American Educational Research Association. She is a full professor in the School of Leadership and Education Science at the University of San Diego. Her research focuses on race and ethnic studies in education with a theoretical focus on critical race theory, critical whiteness studies, critical pedagogy and feminism of color. Specifically, she uses a feminist of color approach to deconstruct the emotionality of whiteness in urban teacher education and how it impacts urban education. Her other research interest is on motherscholarship and supporting women of color and motherscholars in the academy.

A former K-12 teacher in both South Central, Los Angeles Unified School District and Bed-Stuyvesant, New York City Department of Education, she earned her bachelors in cultural communication from University of California San Diego, teaching credential at San Diego State University, and her master's in social and Multicultural Foundations at California State University, Long Beach. She earned her doctorate at UCLA with an emphasis in race and ethnic studies in education. She delivers national talks and workshops on whiteness, racial justice, and diversity. She was awarded the 2014 American Educational Research Association's Division K (Teacher Education) Innovations in Research on Diversity in Teacher Education Award and the 2015 *and* 2017 Colorado Rosa Parks Diversity Award. In 2015, she was awarded Excellence in Research by the School of Education & Human Development at University of Colorado Denver. In 2016 she was awarded the university's 2016 Graduate School's Dean Mentoring Award. In 2018 she was ranked as the top 25 women in higher education making a difference in the journal, *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*. Some of her publications can be found in top tiered journals such as, *Race, Ethnicity, and Education, Teachers College Record, Equity and Excellence, and Journal of Teacher Education*.

Her first solo-authored book entitled *Feeling White: Whiteness, Emotionality, and Education* earned the 2017 Honorable Mention for the Society of Professors of Education. Her second book, *Surviving Becky(s): Pedagogies for Deconstructing Whiteness and Gender*, came out January 2020 and was nominated for the AESA book award. Her third book *Critical Theoretical Research Methods in Education* came out May 2021 and her fourth book coedited with Dr. Paul Gorski on White Liberalism, *The Other Elephant in the Classroom,* will be published by Teachers College Press and out September 2023. She is a motherscholar of three, including boy-girl twins, a runner, yogi, an avid Lakers and Dodgers fan, and Bachata ballroom dancer

Did you see me? A Conversation with Education Folks

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Did You See Me?

I wear my professional suit
With my large gold earrings,
My make-up and stylish hair-
Yet, you walk right past me without a "hello" or nod.
Did you see me?
When I speak in the crowded room
I am interrupted without finishing my thoughts.
I was trying to ask for recognition of my hard work-
Yet I was shut down and my voice was canceled.
Did you see me?
Staying late hours,
Creating extra lesson plans,
Communicating with families after hours,
Trying to demonstrate inclusive education, since after all, it's the law.
Yet, when I hear my name mentioned while passing,
I am "indoctrinating students,"
I am "making White folks feel bad,"
I am "not sticking to the curriculum."
Did you see me?
Through the bad faith to ensure you are okay,
You refused to acknowledge my Queer Black presence,
You took away my voice,
And you ridiculed my efforts to affirm children.
Yet, I am still here…
And you will see me

Introduction

Thinking about Childish Gambino (2018) and his song, "This is America," I was heavily inspired to write this article. When I think about the song and the video, it connects with me because no bullet has a name, and no matter how hard people work for money, fame or some sort of recognition, it could be taken away in a heartbeat. The fear of gun violence, police brutality, "mistaken identity," and discrimination in corporate and academic worlds is real. But at the same time, we as BIPOC folx continue to try to pull joy from our situations, often in visual appearance or performance, just to make it through each day. Oftentimes, we conform to society not out of want, but out of need—for survival. Through all of the bad faith or dishonest actions we take by conforming to society as marginalized individuals, we minimize our greatness, and this needs to stop. We also need

our allies to act with urgency to provide safe spaces for us to be ourselves and encourage greatness, not conformity, in order to succeed in educational spaces.

The format of this article is outside of the box in that poetry is woven throughout. I wanted to emulate Childish Gambino (2018) with an artistic format of sharing truths while also challenging thoughts and actions at the same time. Using poetry is an artform used by my ancestors, Langton Hughes, Audre Lorde, Maya Angelou, James Baldwin, and so many more. Instead of conforming to the traditional article format expected by many publishing companies, I wanted to provide writing in my truest form while honoring my culture. In Academia, we as Queer BIPOC folx often feel constrained and are forced to follow the hegemonic ways established to keep us out of leadership roles, progression with our careers in Academia, and other spaces that White folx fear we may disrupt their "standards." A way to describe what I mean is to think of academic publishing requirements almost the same as "redlining." The format of this article is intentional, and it is my hope that my vulnerability and creativity provide a model for others to feel empowered while also providing a resource to utilize for educating others with this necessary topic.

My identity and positionality provide context for the article. I identify as a Black Queer Woman, and a teacher educator in California. I came from low and then middle-class socioeconomic backgrounds. I attended a LatinX populated elementary school in south Sacramento, a highly populated white junior high school in Elk Grove, CA, and two different high schools-one in south Sacramento, California, and one later in Bloomington, Illinois. I say this because my identities would vary based on where I went to school. Depending on where I was at that moment, I was Black or Mixed, and always considered heterosexual.

When attending schools growing up, I always tried to fit in where I could because my complexion is very fare and I have long, curly hair. Although I lived in a Black household, outside of the house I constantly tried to fit in with some group I was associated with because not many looked like me. I didn't learn much about Black culture in schools, and I realized when I was an adult, that I really connected to LatinX people more so than anyone. I had one Black teacher my whole educational career until my doctoral program where I had another Black teacher. I connected with them a little bit, but was still in the process of understanding who I was as well.

When I lived in Washington, D.C. for a moment in my educational career, I began to see what Black looks like, sounds like, acts like, and so much more. I didn't quite know how to fit in with conversations connecting to Black or Queer identities because I was not raised with people like me. The drive and love I felt for my identities when living in Washington D.C. pushed me to pursue my doctorate degree to learn more and advocate for cultural sustaining pedagogy. I met so many Queer Black folx, and that really hit home for me. I was around people who were happy and out and proud. There were lots of spaces to hang out and learn from one another and celebrate one another. I thought to myself, kids have to learn differently and more authentically, and teachers need to learn about people like me. We should not live in shame or fear, and our identities are beautiful too.

This article is not only going to share personal experiences of mine as an educator and a Black Queer person, but it will also provide research that shows our past and current climates. I challenge the readers to take the ideas and strategies and to think intentionally about what educators experience and what could be done to change the discriminatory narratives within schools. Inclusive curriculum in teacher and leader preparation courses is lacking (Smith & Lander, 2023), and this piece should contribute to that gap and used as a reference for emerging teachers and leaders or for allies who are wanting to do more immediately.

A poem titled, "Your Family, not Mine," will begin the first section that discusses how some families are recognized and celebrated in

schools, but not all families receive that love. Historical and current school climate research as it relates to identifying as LGBTQ+ educators in schools emphasize the need for change.

Thereafter, another poem titled, "Have You Ever?' introduces the current reality of Black and Queer intersectionalities (Crenshaw,1989). As identities intersect, an educator carries the weight of both while also being held responsible for impressionable lives. This section brings light on current policies and violence against BIPOC and Queer folx.

Lastly, I present calls to action for administrators, community allies and educator allies to intentionally move forward with language, policies, conversations, microaggressions, and more. The conclusion provides a summary while connecting back to the poetry and actions for immediate implications.

Your Family, Not Mine

"Welcome to class children! Please tell me about yourselves!"
I listen and praise all their great stories, encouraging new ideas and commonalities.
It's my turn…
"I…have a dog! His name is Oso, like the bear. I…have a roommate. You will see her a lot
Because she is my best friend and we do everything together."
Damn it Bre. 6th year and same story…
Walking into the teacher lounge as a new teacher in a new school
Lots of questions come my way.
"Where are you living?"
"Where are you from?"
"*What does your husband do?*'
If I say something, I could risk being let go like my friend in another district.
But, If I say something, someone else might feel encouraged too.
Why should I say something? They need to leave me alone.
ISOLATION
DEPRESSION
FEAR
HIDING
PRETENDING
LYING
Your family, not mine

Almost 60 years ago, there was a purge of LGBTQ+ educators in Florida (Graves, 2007). Approximately 50 educators were either dismissed or interrogated for their assumed identity. Credentials were confiscated, and positions were terminated based on the suspicion of LGBTQ identities (Evans-Santiago, 2015). Several cases have followed, and within my own research (Evans-Santiago et. Al, 2022), we found that a teacher was dismissed quietly in 2018 for supporting a bi-sexual 6th grade student and not "informing the parent" of the child's identity. This educator tried to provide a safe place in their classroom while they discussed relationships and how they may feel about different people. But parents were in an uproar and went to the district complaining and demanding an immediate consequence. The teacher was asked to finish

their contract at home and then the contract was not renewed. The educator left quietly. Is this educator considered a hero or villain for supporting their student?

Alsup (2005; 2006) conducted qualitative studies exploring teacher development. They analyzed data from interviews of parents and district employees to explore the concept of teacher identities. Parents and district employees tended to consider teachers as heroes or villains. She also followed up in 2019 stating there are narratives of opposition—as others identify teachers. Teachers identified as "hero," are seen as parental figures and nurturers; their actions are upstanding and morally acceptable (Evans-Santiago, 2015). The teachers who are seen as "heroes" do not speak up often and tend to follow the grain, blending in and fitting the societal teacher descriptions. The parental figures appear "wholesome" and innocent, ensuring to not make waves. These educators are rewarded for this behavior and considered the role models within school settings. Their rewarded silence helps to maintain the "wholesome" environment. According to Alsup (2005), these "hero" teachers are usually heterosexual, middle-class, White women. Villains are identified with or connected to "non-conforming," or rebels as they encourage critical thinking and self-reflection as it relates to society. These educators acknowledge their non-conforming identities which influence their personal philosophies of teaching. The villain educators may bring in additional resources or provide alternative ideas or ways to look at society, which others view as refusal to comply with school or district expectations (Alsup, 2007; Evans-Santiago, 2015).

Another connection to this hero vs. villain conception of teachers emerged in a study about the California FAIR Act (Evans-Santiago et. al, 2022), we discovered that 71% of the educator participants surveyed had students with same-sex families at some point in their career. Following that, 75% felt that educators should include curriculum to support LGBTQ+ communities, but less than half felt comfortable teaching it, and not even ten percent of the participants had access to curriculum or resources for inclusion (Evans-Santiago et. al, 2022). There were teachers who wanted to "rebel" but feared not being known as the "hero" at school. This was a small pilot study, but it emphasizes the need for LGBTQ+ professional development, supportive policies, and resources. Without inclusion, both the study and the idea of being identified as a villain when implementing curriculum could result in various mental and physical health issues.

The stress implications associated with isolation, lying, and concealing identities could be detrimental and even life threatening. When adults conceal gender and sexual identity, several stressors and affects come into play. Educators hide their true identity to fit the role of the "hero," which "reduc[es] a sense of authenticity," (Brennan, 2021) and affects motivation as well as interpersonal skills. Brennan (2021) states that concealment occurs because people do not want the identity of "less than" or as a villain (Alsup, 2007).

Several stress related issues might occur with concealment which include isolation or alienation, and self-loathing (Brennan, 2021). Depression and substance misuse are also very common with concealment (Brennan, 2021, Jackson & Mohr, 2016; Pachankis et al., 2015). In Brennan's 2019 study, participants felt like they were "trapped," or "tired." Exertion leads to teacher attrition which results in a shortage of LGBTQ+ educators. The current climate across the nation provides a risk for non-concealment.

As of 2023, at least 650 anti-LGBTQ legislative bills have been introduced or written (Miller, 2023), and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) currently tracks over 450 of them (ACLU, 2023). Of the 450 bills, 228 directly target schools and education across the United States (ACLU, 2023). ACLU informs us that there are 197 bills advancing, 77 have been passed into law, and 218 have been defeated. This is ongoing, but not the half of it. Beyond the anti-LGBTQ bills, the Supreme Court of the United States voted in favor of 303 Creative LLC in *303 Creative LLC* v. *Elenis* (2023) arguing that the First

Amendment provides businesses the right to refuse service based on freedom of speech and civil rights although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits this (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.), and there are 26 states that do not use nondiscrimination laws (Bonta, 2023a,b; Movement Advancement Project, 2023). In other words, 26 states discriminate freely and reject nondiscrimination laws due to their "free speech" and religious rights. This creates a large divide throughout our country and creates the continued fear of being open and honest about LGBTQ+ identities in any public setting within various states across the U.S. The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) has declared a "national state of emergency for LGBTQ+ Americans" (Human Rights Campaign, 2023) due to the overwhelming "legislative assaults" throughout the country.

Black and Queer identities increase the burdens carried by educators within historically marginalized groups due to racist and anti-Diversity, anti–Equity and anti-Inclusion legislation. An example I experienced while obtaining my master's degree is still so clear in my head. I was in an educational law class, and we were working in small groups to present a topic. We chose to discuss how LGBTQ students are bullied and what rights they have in schools. At the end of the presentation, I stated that this was important to me because I identify as a lesbian. It was so silent; you could hear a pin drop. Then a student in my group ran out of the room crying saying I betrayed her. The confusion I felt of having guilt for hurting her feelings, but pride for coming out was also mixed with wondering if the audience's silence would affect my grade. I went back to hiding after that day. Bad faith is sometimes easier to navigate to minimize the extra stress I felt wondering if and when I could be myself and making sure I had a team to work with. It was easier to identify as a Black woman than queer, so I spent the rest of my master's degree journey conforming and remaining silent about my queer identity so I could survive grad school.

The intersectionalities of these identities add a heaviness to an educator's daily workload. The newest legislative bills throughout the country and continued violence and murders continue to add stress and fear of QBIPOC students, educators and leaders. Beyond completing daily job tasks, we are fearful of our own representations. Our brains fill with thoughts such as, "Will they learn of my true identity?" "Will my work colleagues mistreat me now that there is this new bill?" "Will parents judge me or fight to have me removed from my job?" "Am I safe walking to my car, or taking the train, or walking down the street today?" "Am I being too much here, and will this harm my job evaluations?" This heaviness of our own thoughts and emotional turmoil adds to the daily work stress of lesson planning and ensuring student success that we must endure as educators.

Have You Ever?

Have you ever driven your car for miles shaking with adrenaline
Because the police behind you is still running your plates hoping to find something?
I have.
Have you ever walked up to a meat counter and are disregarded for minutes
until an elderly white couple walks right up and gets service?
I have.
Have you ever walked into a store to go and buy milk or batteries,
and a woman near you clutches her purse?
My father has. My brothers have. My spouse has.
Have you ever been denied service in a restaurant, bakery, or other businesses?
My whole community has or will because
It is now FEDERALLY PROTECTED to refuse service to people like us.
You now legally have the right to mistreat me

Throughout the United States, violence against LGBTQ+ communities, especially Queer BIPOC and Trans* communities, has not ceased (HRC Foundation, 2023). The physical, verbal, and legislative assaults are resulting in death.

In the past few years, a self-proclaimed "militia" of men across the country attacked bystanders, protesters, or threatened communities who believe opposite of what they believe. Recognition of these violent and aggressive acts provide awareness because these attacks are not only common in communities, but are also happening on university campuses (Crosse, 2022). Crosse (2022) shared specific comments made from Proud Boy members online as they claimed that the LGBTQ+ population is "an army of dust," and that people need to fight them as they "cower under rocks." Thousands of viewers receive these posts and begin to develop beliefs or opinions based on the information. This can result in amplifying the Proud Boys as more and more people share and repost the original post and add more and more comments and ideas.

People, including our past President, communicate via social media to make plans or encourage actions with one another across the country (Marantz, 2021). This led to the January 6th event at our nation's Capital. The examples above demonstrate how social media amplifies the belief that communities deserve harm, which continues to reach millions of people after the attacks as a way to create urgency. It is common for people to seek out videos of attacks, or to film themselves giving opinions on controversial topics. Since social media algorithms meet individual interests, individual feeds are filled with more and more posts connected to their interests. Because of social media algorithms and extensive outreach, it is more common to see LGBTQ+ communities' hosted events experience interruption by Proud Boy attackers (Hill, 2023; Porras, 2023; Ravikumar, 2022) and LGBTQ+ individuals often fear violence while living daily (Bonita, 2023), wondering if they will be today's target.

Violence targeting the Trans* and Gender Creative community, specifically Black Trans* women, has increased drastically (HRC Foundation, 2023). Often times, the violent crimes that have or have not been reported result in injury or death. This unfortunate spike in violence could be a factor that prevents transwomen to work in education. There are more educators that identify as nonbinary or as transmen versus transwomen. Most often, if there are transwomen in education, they identify as White. The gap of Trans*educators throughout the U.S. is prevalent, and due to the

legislative harm caused across the United States (Bonta, 2023b), it should not come to a surprise.

There are over 20 million LGBTQ adults in the United States (HRC Foundation, 2021; US Census Bureau, 2023). In 2017-18, the National Center for Education Statistics concluded that there were 79% White, 9% Hispanic, 7% Black, 2% Asian, 2% Other, and 1% Native/Pacific Islander educators throughout the United States (IES, 2021). There are over 3 million teachers in the U.S., which includes LGBTQ+ White and BIPOC individuals. Unfortunately, this number fluctuates due to educators not identifying publicly. It is believed that one in ten educators is LGBTQ+ (Jennings, 2015), and several small qualitative studies exist and provide insight into LGBTQ+ educators' experiences (Evans-Santiago, 2015; Simmons et. al, 2021). Qualitative data assists in understanding the struggles and needs for teachers who identify outside of the heteronormative perspective.

If we took the approximate amount of LGBTQ+ educators, 300,000 (IES, 2021; Jennings, 2015), and multiplied the number of children they would teach annually (approx. 30 per year) at an elementary level until retirement (25 years), LGBTQ+ elementary teachers would teach and care for approximately 225,000,000 students over 25 years. If we took that number and assumed they all taught in secondary schools (over 100 students/semester), that number could equate to over 1 billion students in the next 25 years. Whether elementary or secondary, we know the number of students impacted by LGBTQ+ educators is between 200M and 1B students in the next 25 years.

As an educator who identifies as Black and Queer, each day there are additional weights that I and my fellow Queer educators of color carry. The expectations of adhering to state and national teaching standards while ensuring students demonstrate knowledge through required assessments are daily struggles; teachers lose sleep trying to figure out how to ensure they can produce academically successful results. But when the extra burdens of discrimination and fear of violence are added, it makes it even more difficult to concentrate, teach effectively, and to show up as our full selves.

The narrative has potential to change. There are administrators, educators, teacher educators, local and national organizations that could help make a difference with teacher support and effectiveness, which will in turn result in millions of students receiving fulfilling educational experiences.

Calls to Action

Immediate action steps are necessary to ensure QBIPOC educators and students have a sense of belonging in educational settings. Administrators and educational leaders, community members, and allies have the knowledge and resources to come together to make change. The following calls to action are provided for educational leaders to take and share with those who may not know what to do yet. These calls are immediate action steps for allies and community members who want to help but not know what to do or how to do it.

Provide resources

Teacher and leader education courses lack this inclusive curriculum, and we must provide applicable tools and resources for our teacher and leader educators to utilize right now. A text titled, *T* is for Thriving: Blueprints for Affirming Trans* and Gender Creative Lives and Learning in Schools* (Darling-Hammond & Evans-Santiago, 2024) provides lesson plans for K-12 teachers in various content areas to use in schools, and these were written by Queer folx and allies. The text also provides personal narratives from eleven T* GC people to inform the work. I encourage readers to utilize this book for teacher and leader preparation courses and K-12 schools.

Administrators/educational leaders

On academic campuses within TK-16 settings, policies need reevaluation and revisions.

Evaluate language in policies

I call on academic leaders to dive deeper into the language used within the policies. Are the words inclusive? Is there underlying biased language when describing the policy? An example of a policy revision is the implementation of more inclusive language when addressing bullying in California. Seth's Law (ACLU, 2023) "focuses on protecting students who are bullied based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity/gender expression, as well as race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, disability, and religion" and required California school bullying policies revisions in 2012.

Make inclusive activities/spaces on campus. Another immediate action for educational leaders in academic settings is to develop and maintain inclusive activities/spaces on campuses. An event to bring people together in elementary school could involve welcoming families versus parents or "moms and dads," which limits and set binary biases for family identities (Reinking & Evans-Santiago 2020). Another example is to ensure college campuses have affinity groups, centers, or safe meeting areas for marginalized groups on campuses. These spaces should allow conversations, social activities, resources, and comradery opportunities.

Advocate Lastly, legislatures often introduce or pass bills that minimize advancement for and discriminate against BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities. Administrators and educational leaders should provide statements to show their department, school, or organization's stance against various policies as such. For instance, the Chancellor's Office at the California State University provided a statement within a few days after the Supreme Court ruling against affirmative action in June 2023 (*Students* v. *President*, 2023). More shared statements will demonstrate where people stand and what they believe regarding discrimination and fair treatment in schools.

Community Allies

Community allies are encouraged to act as well.

Vote. Eligible voters should participate in the electoral process regularly. Oftentimes president elections result in higher participation, but in between president elections, there are elections for other important offices within our government (Senate, House of Representatives, local officials), and bills are continuously on the voting ballots, which should have far more citizen votes. If we as a community, which includes family members of students in educational settings, show up to board meetings, sign petitions, and vote at each opportunity provided, representation of various voices are amplified when addressing local, state, and national issues.

Purchase books for teachers and libraries. Community allies could also purchase books for teachers and libraries. Currently several LGBTQ+ and BIPOC books are banned (PEN America, 2023) and require inspections to ensure they are allowed to have them in school settings. Recently, Scholastic book fairs removed books containing LGBTQ or racial themes from the shelves and separated them into a special collection, "Share Every Story, Celebrate Every Voice." This created an uproar and the community fought for Scholastic to understand that they were segregating Queer and BIPOC populations. Presently has reversed this decision, apologizing for the segregation of books (Schermele, 2023).

Read banned books. Beyond school environments, I encourage the community to read banned books to create their own beliefs and perceptions. We need to continuously think who decided to ban them and what perspectives are being left out of the room? When books are banned, the decision is often decided upon without public opinion. If we as parents read the books ourselves, we can make better informed decisions to determine if the book is appropriate for children. Often times, people take sides based on hear say and do not inform themselves by

reading the books prior to supporting a decision. And if we as a community enjoy the book and believe it does not cause harm, we need to buy them.

There are banned book clubs, and children read texts outside of school, so seeking out other places for donations is also encouraged. If community members disagree with certain banned books, the petition for more inclusive literature could make a difference in local areas. Reading various books that represent people and events that are often hidden, or not discussed, opens doors for students of all ages to see a variety of perspectives and cultures and literature also provides mirrors for marginalized individuals to see themselves and connect directly with fictional or nonfictional characters.

Attend school site council and local school board meeting. Families must attend school site council meetings and board meetings regularly. They need to research what discussions and voting issues within their communities are occurring and participate as much as possible. Showing up at these meetings to represent an issue or to support people who are presenting topics to administrators and board members is prevalent for our current issues that affect the well-being of students and staff in schools. There are several board meetings throughout the country that gained national attention due to parent representation just within 2023. One example is in Elk Grove, California, where the parents showed up and stated their opposing opinions, trying to convince the board to think about various issues when voting for banning LGBTQ books in the district's school libraries (Halbleib, 2023). No decision was made, but it was a time for voices to be heard. Another instance is in Montgomery County, Maryland (Fox 5, 2023). The families and allies not only attended, but also stood outside to protest. The opposing sides shared their ideas and reasons to either ban or allow LGBTQ books, and no decision was made, as it was a listening session for the agenda item.

We need to make sure our voices are heard. Just as many of the opposing teams show up to these meetings. The presence of people assists with the influence of the decisions, so it is important to contribute to the conversations to help the school board members make just and inclusive decisions for schools. Being a part of the solution helps others gain insight and increases understanding as to what students need and how to address inclusion within all schools.

Attend community cultural events. Attending cultural events within the community demonstrate care and advocacy. Currently, organizations such as student clubs or Parents Families and Friends of Gays and Lesbians participate in various events to share personal experiences, resources, or to share their cultural practices with the community. Examples of community events are annual Pride parades and fairs, drag story hours, Juneteenth celebrations, Black History month and Pride month events. If community allies participate by attending or volunteering, not only will they show their support, but they will also increase their knowledge when attending, listening, and learning from the cultural activities. Currently, many of these events are greeted by protestors or acts of violence like mentioned before (Crosse, 2022; Hill, 2023; Porras, 2023; Ravikumar, 2022), and we need to be there to show support and to demonstrate how important it is to have these events in our living spaces. Allies and the BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities show up to also protect those around them due to potential violence or disruption. We can build human walls or stop them from entering spaces to allow events to commence. We thrive when we lift each other up and when we provide spaces for people to be their authentic selves with care and affirmation (Darling-Hammond, 2018).

Support LGBTQ+ and BIPOC businesses: Purchasing from LGBTQ+ and/or BIPOC owned businesses also shows support for individuals and their communities in which they represent. Understanding the impact

conglomerate corporations have on smaller businesses, financially supporting marginalized individuals as they provide goods and services to the communities in which we live demonstrates appreciation and value. Support and advocacy can also take the form of a buycott. Allies should buycott, or refrain from buying, from homophobic and racist businesses. Businesses utilize the right to refuse service to individuals based on the concept of "freedom of speech" and "freedom of religion." There are lists of businesses who disagree with anti-LGBTQ+ state legislation throughout the Unites States (Brousseau, 2022) and we should consciously identify and utilize them. Weaver (2022) provided a few companies to renounce for allies who support Black Lives Matter, including Wal-Mart and Home Depot. Asking local organizations where to shop will help determine who to buycott locally.

Educator Allies

Educator allies, or teachers within school sites that may not identify with marginalized racial or cultural group but advocate for them, could advocate both in and out of schools.

Refrain from assuming identities.

First, educators should not assume identities (race, ethnicity, religion, gender, orientation, etc.) with students or colleagues. Society has set identity standards based on visual appearances, and individuals may not identify how society sees them. Utilizing pronouns and/or requesting pronouns from people within meetings is valuable to show that there is not an assumption about how one identifies-it is the simplest and one of the easiest but necessary ways to respect and affirm humans and their gender identities.

Instead provide opportunities for people to talk about themselves. Racial and ethnic identities are not specifically based on color, hair, or facial features. Having activities where people can share about themselves or paying attention to conversations and actions help with identifying people around them. It is important to not ask questions like what I was asked when I was a teacher, "Are you Black?" or "How is your husband?" These microaggressive comments are usually because of curiosity but come off rude because it demonstrates a lack of attention to personal identities. As a woman with light skin, I had to fight for my Black identity and do not appreciate when asked if I am Black. Also, I am a feminine presenting person most days. This does not mean I am married to a man. Assuming that I am married or that I am in a relationship with a man is offensive because I am Queer and have had serious relationships that do not fit heteronormative expectations. The U.S. majority does not define all who reside within the country, and considering assumptions while minimizing microaggressions and biases when working with people demonstrates care.

Read and research. Educators should also ask questions for clarification. If a person makes a comment and it makes a person wonder or begin to assume, teachers should ask for clarity. Cultural practices that are unique or vary from what people may be accustomed to could cause curiosity. Educator allies should research about cultures or ask someone in a respectful way for better understanding. It is appreciated when people take the time to learn about cultures versus always asking others, ensuring to balance out cultural taxation.

Include relevant literature and study of current events in lessons. Lastly, students depend on instructors for new learnings, regardless of the age. Because of this reliance on educators, including lessons, literature, and current events within daily instruction could make an impact when applied. It is not necessary to discuss people solely in a nationally celebrated month. It is important to discuss current events regardless of the month. Sharing literature that represents various authors and characters or historical events validates historically marginalized people in school settings. Becoming more intentional as an educator supports

inclusion and belonging for all present in educational settings.

Conclusion

In summation, to be a Queer BIPOC person in education has challenges at each phase of life within education, whether as a student, teacher, teacher educator, or administrator. The poems throughout demonstrate personal struggle and experience while it relates to our marginalized communities. Educators are seen as heroes or villains within their schools' settings, and oftentimes, when openly identifying as LGBTQ+, teachers are considered villains. Not concealing Queer identities in schools is a risk across the nation. Currently discrimination runs rampant within our country, and we are in a state of emergency.

Most references to incidents and cases directly connect to California throughout this article due to personal experiences for reference, but this is one state within the country. Hateful violence happening throughout the United States is extremely overwhelming to not only discuss, but also to continuously read news articles, legislative bills and national reports which provide unwanted stress. When writing this, I became overwhelmed at times, and I attempted to minimize my personal trauma as much as possible.

The bright side to the trauma appears in the calls to action. Administrators and educational leaders are charged to review and revise policies, create and maintain safe spaces and inclusive activities, and take a stand through statements when possible. Community allies are charged to vote, purchase books for educational learning, attend meetings and events, and support local businesses. Educator allies need to act by minimizing identity biases and microaggressions, asking questions and researching, and including more curriculum within everyday lessons. With our communities working together, becoming more visible, and advocating more than ever, we will change the narrative.

As referenced in my first poem, I believe that teachers within my cultural and racial communities think, "You want me to come and teach daily, but every day I am worried about my life." Beyond the daily expectations of grading and advising students, lesson planning, and collaborating with instructors, some of us must protect ourselves from our racist next-door neighbor. Some of us experience the need to calmly refocus after hard conversations where a person believes affirmative action is wrong, and progression is solely based on hard work, not race. And these bricks on top of bricks are carried on our shoulders daily, which results in us sometimes conforming, using bad faith to survive.

But with our educational leaders, allies, and teachers advocating and taking action, there is hope. In the first poem, I felt, "Through the bad faith to ensure you are okay, You refused to acknowledge my Queer Black presence, You took away my voice, And you ridiculed my efforts to affirm children." Throughout the article, it was shared how we need each other; we need allies, communities, and academic folx to hear us, learn from us, and advocate for us. I want to share my ideas and my learnings, but when I am constantly ignored or pushed out of the room, I cannot provide insight or advocate for our students who need to be heard or for my communities. Allies need to consciously think about how policy and actions affect Queer BIPOC as educators, leaders, and students. We need to be acknowledged and there are times where we need our allies to make the space in a room for us, even if it means to step aside to bring us in.

I am continuing to research, educate, and collaborate with my communities and allies. I will fight with the bricks on my shoulders and ensure that education moves forward, not backward. But this is not a fight we can do on our own. We need leaders and educators to stand with us and to help make paths or seats for us. But just like Chosholm (bringyourownchair.org, 2023) stated, "If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair." So either we can

work together and we can have a nice seat in the room, or we will bring our folding chairs. The QBIPOC which I represent are combatting for visibility and belonging, and we say proudly, "I am still here…And you will see me." Let us change this narrative together.

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Bad Faith and Impossible Work: Novice Teachers Clap Back

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Abstract

This article examines teacher education's investment in "transformative promises of narrative arcs" (Wilderson, 2020, p. 102) like social justice teacher preparation that largely maintains a status quo and evades their/our/each other's agency towards critical inquiry, truth, and righteous, radical action. Classroom teachers wrote "letters" to speak back to Teacher Educators' stated goals and desires, questioning whether teacher education programs can adequately prepare classroom teachers for the (impossible) work of public schools. In addition to interrogating bad faith narratives that link teacher education programs as levers for social justice, the article proposes that the methodology of letters can offer a critical space for reflection and critical assessment.

Introduction

In the field of education and in broader considerations of social change, teacher education is frequently cited as a space for building a new social order (Counts, 1932) by preparing future educators to lead transformation toward justice (Cochran-Smith et al, 2009; Reagan & Hambacher, 2021; Zeichner, 2009). Rising above the fray of P-12 politics of compliance and custodial obligation, many teacher educators produce scholarship that reinforces this perspective, emphasizing their role in promoting equity and diversity in the profession which, ideally, will benefit P-12 learners and their communities. In this article, we examine whether such stated ideals reflect discursive acts of self-preservation rather than responsibilities "towards critical inquiry, truth, and righteous action." (Gilmore et al., 2023). Through methodologies that amplify the voices of teachers of color, we suggest that these claims of (social) justice teacher education represent a bad faith argument that can be harmful to prospective teachers and their future students. The bad faith argument this article examines is that teacher education, as presently designed, is a focal lever in fighting for social change and educational justice. This claim exemplifies the "narrative arc of redemption"

(Wilderson, 2020) while in reality perpetuating institutions that sustain existing, and often exploitative, relations of power. This harmful bad faith narrative is preserved by an array of practices, gaps, and assumptions with substantial investment in the preservation of anti-Blackness and white supremacy. Practices include, but are not limited to, biases in curricula and assessments (Au, 2022), mechanisms of surveillance and supervision (Fedders, 2019), neoliberal ideologies (Gorlewski & Tuck, 2019; Monreal, 2024), occupation of Indigenous land (Tuck & Yang, 2012), unethical employment requirements (i.e. student teaching), minimal (recent) experience with/in public schools, feigned powerlessness to unjust district/state policies, dismissal of (student) teachers' lived realities, and institutional cultures that buttress such actions as normative. Still, the narrative power of teacher education as liberating agent allows teacher education programs to largely maintain a status quo that evades their/our/each other's agency towards critical inquiry, truth, and righteous, radical action. Few programs commit resources to creating opportunities for critique, much less resistance, to the inequitable grammars of schooling in relation to teacher education. In concept, structure, and content, this manuscript aims to demonstrate the significance and potential impact of such critiques.

Towards these ends, we aim to develop a practical (i.e. usable) and methodological contribution grounded in the voices of aspiring, novice, and experienced teachers. More specifically, we (our collective group of classroom and teacher educators) seek to create more spaces where such teachers can speak (or clap) back to the stated missions, inspirations, and designs of teacher educators and teacher education programs. Inspired by decolonial, feminist, and Black radical traditions of letter writing (Hernández Adkins, 2021; Baldwin, 1963; McKittrick, 2021; Player et al., 2020; Teacher of Color Collective & Souto-Manning, 2022; Tuck, 2009), the article features "letters" from mostly teachers of color speaking back to teacher education (see also Gilmore, 2019). Those of us assembling the article, teachers and teacher educators, hope the responses highlight the bad faith narratives that reproduce injustice while collectively imagining better futures.

Previous Literature

Teacher Education as a Tool for Justice

Teacher education plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of education and society as a whole (Darling-Hammond, 2017). As such, a variety of scholarship (including our own) details how teacher education serves as a powerful tool for promoting justice and equity within, and for educational settings. Through critical examination of existing educational systems and policies and the learning of specific pedagogies, teachers can identify and address systemic barriers that perpetuate inequality. Transformative experiences challenge prospective teachers' assumptions and biases, fostering an awareness of social injustices and empowering them to become advocates for change (Conklin & Hughes, 2016; Darling-Hammond, 2017; Kavanagh & Danielson, 2020).

By embracing caring, critical, and justice-oriented practices, teacher education programs can facilitate future educators' development as advocates for social change (Conklin & Hughes, 2016). Teacher educators, then, often see their roles as modeling and fostering caring relationships with students and communities that in turn help create supportive and inclusive learning environments with their students' students. Additionally, critical examination of existing educational systems and policies allows educators to identify and address systemic barriers that perpetuate inequality. Conklin and Hughes (2016) highlight the importance of developing a deep understanding of social justice issues and actively promoting equity and inclusivity. Similarly, Kavanagh and Danielson (2020) focus on critical practice teacher education, advocating for the integration of critical pedagogy and transformative experiences that provide opportunities for prospective teachers to engage in critical dialogue and self-

reflection. According to the authors by critically examining their own beliefs, practices, and assumptions, educators can develop a deeper understanding of the social, cultural, and political contexts that influence education. This heightened awareness enables them to challenge and transform existing practices that perpetuate injustice and inequality. The authors contend that through teacher education that embeds critical practice, preservice teachers are equipped with the tools and perspectives necessary to create inclusive classrooms that support the diverse needs of all students.

Teacher Residency Programs (TRPs), in which some of the teachers in this article participated, have emerged as an effective approach to teacher preparation, aligning with the principles of justice-oriented education (Darling-Hammond et al, 2020). In residency programs, aspiring teachers work closely with experienced mentors in school settings, immersing themselves in authentic teaching experiences. It is thought that this immersive and collaborative model allows aspiring teachers to develop a deep understanding of the complexities of teaching and the diverse needs of students (Gorlewski et al, 2021; Guha et. al, 2016). Residency programs provide an experiential learning environment that enables prospective teachers to bridge theory and practice, critically reflect on their teaching approaches, and develop culturally responsive strategies that promote justice and equity. Often these programs create cohorts that enable residents to develop supportive relationships within a community of practice that outlasts their participation in the formal program. Moreover, this supportive approach, which is often paired with funding that provides monetary resources for pre-service teachers (PSTs) (e.g. stipends, tuition reduction), has proven more effective than traditional teacher education programs at recruiting candidates of color (Guha et al., 2016). In sum, teacher education programs aim to contribute to the creation of an inclusive and equitable and inclusive educational system that empowers all students to thrive (Darling-Hammond et al, 2020; Guha et. al, 2016).

Teachers of Color in "Social Justice" Teacher Education Programs

In "social justice" teacher education programs, there is often discourse about the importance of diversifying the teacher workforce and centering the experiences of (future) teachers of color. Programs highlight teacher beliefs and funds of knowledge (Reagan et al., 2016; Vernikoff et al., 2022) as particularly significant in addressing systemic inequities within education. Yet, a growing body of research finds that despite this narrative, social justice teacher education is focused on preparing white teachers for diverse classrooms; in turn neglecting the need to prepare teachers of color to teach in the same diverse classrooms (Cherry-McDaniel, 2019; Gilmore, 2019; House-Niamke & Sato, 2019; Smith-Kondo & Bracho, 2019; View and Fredrick, 2011). To this point, Smith-Kondo and Bracho (2019) write, "cultural identities are valuable, [but] they are neither a pedagogical substitute nor universally transferable" (p. 156). Thus, "while the need for teachers of color [in social justice teacher education programs] is undisputed," (Cherry-McDaniel, 2019, p. 241) it is imperative to problematize the assumption that mere presence and rhetoric lead to critical preparation.

In particular, teachers of color in K-12 schools that predominantly serve students of color, often encounter tensions between their commitment to educating students of color and the prevailing narrative that places the burden solely on individual teachers to address the mis-education of students of color (Dumas, 2016; Philip & Brown, 2020). This narrative overlooks the systemic inequities at play and places an overwhelming responsibility on teachers of color to fix education injustices. Thus, teachers of color in, or just out of social justice-focused teacher education programs often find themselves grappling with the weight of this double-bind, this impossible responsibility (Colomer, 2019; Monreal & Stutts, 2023; Teacher of Color

Collective & Souto-Manning, 2022). These educators find themselves addressing the underlying structural inequities, advocating for transformative change, and working for individual student success within contexts that both demand this labor, but fail to recognize its toll. Such conditions place undue burden on individual teachers who may not be adequately prepared for this aspect of social justice work.

Hence, as we work towards equitable education systems, it is imperative to address both the representation of teachers of color and the underlying systemic issues that contribute to educational inequities. Oversimplifying the solution by solely focusing on increasing the number of teachers of color without concurrently addressing broader systemic concerns can be harmful (perhaps even reifying this bad faith narrative; see also Monreal, 2024; Philip & Brown, 2020, Tosolt, 2019). Efforts to promote teacher diversity should be accompanied by the creation of supportive and inclusive school environments, culturally responsive curriculum, and equity-oriented policies while actively rejecting unequal resource distribution, biased curriculum, and institutional racism. Only then can teacher education programs start to provide spaces for teachers of color to critically examine and navigate the complexities of educating students of color within an unjust system, while also fostering support and solidarity among educators of diverse backgrounds. Such work aligns with Philip and Brown's (2020) call for a nuanced understanding of the need for more teachers of color and the need to improve research on pre-service and novice teachers understandings of identity and practice as ideals confront experience (Costigan, 2002; Pillen et al., 2013; Sachs, 2001; Sinclair, 2008; Sutherland et al., 2010).

Theory and Method/ology

Motivated by the special issue call (Gilmore et al., 2023), the teacher education faculty contributing to this article recognized a need for alternative and radical interrogations into the role of teacher education in perpetuating "transformative promises of narrative arcs" (Wilderson, 2020, p. 102). Wilderson (2020) theorizes "transformative promises of narrative arcs" as idea(l)s that tie social struggle to full(er) humanity, belonging, and citizenship. However, to Wilderson (2020) such idea(l)s refuse the reality of anti-blackness in our world(s) and the underlying truth that Blackness is coterminous to social death. Put another way, so long as people assert their own *humanity*[7] in relation to not being Black, any promise of an arc (of progress) is a flat line. Still, because all non-Black people have (varying degrees of) hope within narrative arcs (such as teacher education for social justice), they are rarely confronted, critiqued, or questioned. In other words, if we (all non-Black humans) benefit (at least marginally) from an anti-Black world, there is no real motive for structural change. In this way, bad faith narratives continue. Seeking, then, to "radically assess" (Teacher of Color Collective & Souto-Manning, 2022, p. 68) the bad faith narratives of teacher education, we sought to center the lived experiences and knowledge of teachers of color by intentionally creating a new space for them to speak back to mostly white teacher educators. Collectively, we prioritized a methodology that was rooted in the knowledge, experience, and wisdom of teachers of color *and* allowed them to respond in their own words, in their own space, and in their own time to the stated goals and desires of (their) teacher educators. For this reason, we turned to the idea of letter writing. Inspired by recent interdisciplinary efforts to reimagine the letter-essay as a personal political form, we believed "letters" would offer time (i.e. not the spontaneity of an interview) and space (i.e. distance from teacher educators) for teachers to tell their own truths, to "clap back" to power structures teacher educators operate with/in – and thus re/produce.

[7] Importantly, Wilderson (2020) theorizes that one's humanity "stems *not* from their positive attributes but from the fact that they are not Black, they are no slaves" (p. 102, emphasis original).

In outlining our own take on the methodology of letter writing, we turned to work grounded in decolonial, feminist, and Black radical traditions of letter writing (Adkins, 2021; Baldwin, 1963; McKittrick, 2022; Player et al., 2020; Teacher of Color Collective & Souto-Manning, 2022; Tuck, 2009). Baldwin (1963; see also 1962) uses the letter-essay to communicate the "menacing," "mad," and "criminal" realities that recreate an anti-Black and oppressed society. Writing to (white) teachers, Baldwin (1963) says "in the attempt to correct so many generations of bad faith and cruelty…you [teachers] will meet the most fantastic, the most brutal, and the most determined resistance. There is no point in pretending that this won't happen." (p. 42). Inspired by Baldwin, The Teacher of Color Collective and Souto-Manning (2022) show how the form and content of his epistolary work ring p(l)ainly true 70 years later. Speaking directly to the discipline and practice of teacher education, the Teacher of Color Collective and Souto-Manning (2022) offer their own composite, counter-storied letter to show teacher education's investment in protecting and upholding whiteness. They write:

> *Epistemic violence was at the core of our collective experiences in teacher education. Our individual letters were deeply personal and served as spaces for truthtelling, as sites of healing…We believe our collective letter-essay is equal parts intimate and political; it portrays the violence of our experiences in teacher education, encasing much of the epistemic violence…systemically sponsored by teacher education.* (Teacher of Color Collective & Souto-Manning, 2022, p. 70)

The letter, then, is more than a static object, a mere glimpse into a moment of time. The letter, perhaps better stated as "to letter" is a process, an event of speaking truth to power (in teacher education). As such, McKittrick (2022) describes how letters are always (already) writing themselves because teachers of color are always (already) encountering and traversing systems of (educational) violence (see also Monreal, 2022). Thus, *to letter* is to lean into the fugitive spaces that are also sites of struggle, study, and dreaming otherwise (Hernández Adkins, 2021).

Our collective method of letter-writing is intended to evoke thoughtful dialogue that equalizes, or at least seeks to minimize the inequity of power relations (in teacher education). The teacher educators on the team, cognizant of the demands on teacher time as well as the tendency of educators to be kind in their reflections on their own educational experiences, sought to emphasize three key points. First, the voices of teacher participants would be central. Second, in keeping with the "bad faith narrative" frame of the piece, teachers should speak/write openly and candidly, and be critical of their programs and program personnel (including team members). Third, teacher time would be prioritized throughout the project. For example, the teacher educators would draft agenda and frameworks for sessions, but teachers could deviate or make changes. In short, the team was convened with teacher educators as laborers led by the ideas and perceptions of the teachers.

To be more specific about the process, letter writing emerged after several open-ended discussions surrounding bad-faith narratives in teacher education. These initial conversations involved seven teacher educators, two experienced public school teachers (one prepared through an alternative route and another through a traditional route), and three public school educators who recently completed a cohort based teacher residency program. Three of the five public school teachers identify as teachers of color, and four identify as female and one identifies as male. In an effort to provide time, space, and structure following these initial conversations, the collective decided that the teacher educators would write down their dreams and hopes for teacher education. Thus, teacher educators took two weeks to respond to the following prompt in a shared google document: *I inspire, and work toward teacher education, to be…*" Most responses were 1-2 paragraphs. From there, the classroom educators wrote/clapped back to the teacher educator "letters" with the prompt - "In any way, length,

or style of your choosing, use this space to speak (or clap) back to the stated missions, inspirations, and designs of teacher educators and teacher education programs." The group met again to discuss the letters to determine salient points and broad themes. The following findings are a result of this conversation.

Findings

Robust discussion, in writing and in meetings convened virtually, ensued in response to the prompts. Teacher participants narrated significant challenges, amplified systemic obstacles, and identified important gaps in teacher educator thinking. Overall, classroom teachers described experiences that reinforce a broad theme that aligns with a bad faith narrative perpetuated by teacher education programs. In essence, classroom teachers challenged the narrative that even high quality teacher education programs could adequately prepare them for the (impossible) work of public schools and that teacher education, as presently designed, is a focal lever in fighting for social change and educational justice. What teachers described were public schools as sets of overlapping and exploitative institutions that largely sustain existing, and often exploitative, relations of power. Thus, even though the classroom educators' responses aligned to some degree with the program and teacher educators' mission, vision, and goals, classroom teachers also saw teacher education writ large as invested in the same structures that seemed immovable in their public schools. Terms and concepts such as "humanizing," "equitable," "liberatory," justice," "democracy," "public" were prevalent, and narratives/letters resonated with aspiration and hope coupled with calls for critical disruptive action that challenged each other's agency towards critical inquiry, truth, and righteous, radical action.

Thus, we articulate one broad theme, buttressed by three subthemes: The assertion *that even high quality teacher education programs can adequately prepare classroom teachers for the (impossible) work of public schools and that teacher education, as presently designed, is a focal lever in fighting for social change and educational justice*, is *a bad faith narrative.* The overall theme resonates because it brings into relief the significance of the space of praxis between schools and the institutions of higher education that seek to prepare teachers to work in schools. It underscores both the ineffectiveness of teacher education programs and emphasizes the unreasonable expectations associated with the work of teaching, especially for novice educators. We now move to discuss this overall theme with three subthemes emphasizing classroom teachers' narrative and letters.

Subtheme #1: No Program can Adequately Prepare Candidates for the First Year of Teaching

Subtheme #1 is: No teacher education program could ever prepare candidates for the experience of being a first-year teacher. This theme was echoed, almost word for word, by two participants during a virtual meeting discussing their letters. Both were nearly finished with their first year as full-time teachers in an urban district and focused on the work of public education. The first explained, "What you [as classroom teachers] are asked to do, from every angle, is impossible… I don't know how to do what the district is asking us to do, with the number of kids and the lack of support. That all seems impossible too." The second teacher, describing the challenges of meeting classroom goals, stated, "It doesn't feel like you're ever going to get there because everything seems impossible. When you add it all together it all seems impossible. You are not meeting the standards of where you want to be in any aspect. And it's hard to feel like a good teacher. But then you hear veteran teachers say the same thing, and that's discouraging."

In addition, in written responses that reflect the exchanged letters aspect of this project, participants elaborated on the dis/connection between teacher education and classroom work. One wrote, "No teacher education program can comprehensively prepare you for what you will

walk into as a first year teacher. The entire year is exhausting, overwhelming, and it is impossible to remember all the specific lessons on pedagogy from your teacher education program." Another teacher composed an extended metaphor illustrating this theme:

> *Imagine you are on a walk, and you come to a river. This is the education system as it currently functions. The water continues on the same path that it has followed for years. There may be new tangents here and there, a new rock to flow around, a deeper pool: a new curriculum, new terminology. One could argue that the river is always changing. They would not be wrong. However, the general path and direction of water flow remains unchanged throughout the years. Earth has been eroded; harmful practices have become deeply embedded in the flow of the current. Now imagine you look up and see a 20 foot cliff. The top of this cliff is where the aspirations become a common reality. The teacher educators are at the top waving and shouting in encouragement. "Come on up!" "Jump!" "You can do it!" So you jump as high as you can, their encouraging words make you feel as though you might just make it. But your jump lands you right back into the river. You try again, and again. Their words of encouragement become less a beacon of hope, and more a point of frustration as you begin to feel as though what they are asking of you is impossible. The reality is that you cannot just jump and reach the top. The knowledge of the goal and the words of encouragement alone are not enough to get you there.*
>
> *Teaching future educators only of the aspirations of education is not enough. It only leaves a river filled with burnt out teachers, exhausting themselves trying to do the impossible. Even if you were somehow able to grit your teeth and climb your way to the top, the goal would still not be met, as the view you would be greeted with would include a river filled with your colleagues, some floating downstream with the current and others still jumping, exhausted.*

This powerful excerpt reveals the embeddedness of this subtheme in the experiences of teachers. It speaks clearly to the bad faith narrative that even high quality teacher education programs can adequately prepare classroom teachers for the (impossible) work of public schools and more so, foregrounds the idea that teacher educators, "wave and shout in encouragement" whilst they (and their programs) benefit from the preservation of these impossible systems. This general focus on navigating these draining, immovable realities also links to subtheme #2, which focuses on isolation through institutional gaps.

Subtheme #2: Isolation and Institutional Gaps

All participants described feeling isolated, and described the negative effects of experiencing both isolation and knowledge gaps that exist within and between different educational institutions (e.g., teacher education programs, first year mentoring supports, public school systems.) These experiences are synthesized by one participant, "As a first-year teacher you are trying to figure things out, but no one tells you what to do." In a written response, one participant critiqued the effectiveness of teacher education programs, noting the gap between their content and classrooms, "Teacher Education Programs in their current form do not teach to the realities of the education system today." Later in the response, the participant acknowledged the importance of values and aspirations within teacher education programs, "As it currently stands there is such a polarity between these aspirations and the realities of the education system that we are currently working within. To truly set a teacher up for success, you cannot ignore the harsh realities of what needs to be overcome and the steps required to do that." The chasm between institutions (purportedly with similar goals), as well as the information and knowledge gaps within schools and teacher education programs, contribute to the isolation experienced by teachers. In one whole group

discussion, two different classroom educators described the separation in terms of "islands":

> *My colleague and I chat three times a week and that's how the conversation goes. Every time. You are an island unto yourself. That's the nature of this. It's the nature of it even though we are supposed to be collaborative, cooperative.*
> [The perspective was that] *the classroom was your island and you handled what was happening on your island in your way and there was no real reaching out to others for assistance. If your island is about to experience a tidal wave you have to handle it on your own.*

There was a sense of guilt that seemed to accompany this feeling of being relatively alone. One classroom teacher noted that they "*shouldn't* feel isolated" because teacher education program personnel intentionally worked to create and center (the idea of) a community of collaboration and support. Hence, teachers felt certain "negative" emotions such as loneliness were unacceptable because such affective feelings should not occur after high-quality preparation. Teachers then surveilled themselves to be doing "proper" emotions in the constitution of a "properly" prepared teaching self; this (self)discipling reinforces a sense of self-blame among teachers, exempting teacher education programs and schools from the consequences of their failure to develop and sustain effective systemic approaches for education and induction (see also Zembylas, 2005).

Teachers also shared ways for teacher education programs to potentially remedy feelings of isolation and institutional disconnect. One teacher shared the importance of having a strong community of teachers of color (outside official programs) that served as informal mentors. The teacher wrote:

> *Prior to participating in the* [teacher education] *program, I was fortunate to have been mentored throughout my journey by several strong African American educators. It was important as I had to learn to navigate issues that were unique to persons of color such as responding to microaggressions from colleagues, students, parents, and administrators. The student teaching experience should include the connection to a mentor teacher, whether that person is in the same building or not…Many only see their student teacher for a limited term and rapidly lose touch after the final observation. With such a limited field of teachers of color, it may seem daunting, but I think it is important.*

The above point is particularly salient in terms of speaking back to white teacher educators. It challenges teacher educators to think about how (our own) whiteness stands as a barrier to emotionally supporting students of color. In so far as teacher education programs work to make students feel a certain way, e.g., supported, without providing the tools or contexts to realize such, bolsters the bad faith narrative. Hence, If teacher educators and teacher education programs seek to introduce teacher candidates and novice teachers to the ideas and practices of community and social change, then teacher educators and teacher education programs must provide (perhaps by looking outward) and/or agitate for attendant conditions like the strong mentor practices..

Subtheme #3: Systemic Change Requires Systemic Remedies

For new teachers working in schools that have been historically under-resourced and treated inequitably (via funding schemes, segregation and/or district neglect), the feeling of being overwhelmed is a constant. While feelings of being overwhelmed can be temporarily ameliorated by a sense of belonging (e.g., through connections to cohorts and mentors), institutional challenges that make the work of teaching impossible are systemic and nested within broader social structures that rest upon white supremacy and are permeated with economic inequality. Therefore, to be meaningful, changes must be systemic--not situated on the shoulders of individual teachers. Participants' written reactions reflect a sense of being overwhelmed by coming face to face with this reality, that however aspirational a teacher

education program may be, reality differs. One current classroom teacher wrote:

> *At best, you hold onto the principles instilled from your teacher education program. If you had a good/effective teacher education program, your principles are rooted in advocacy that encourages you to be present within your room; encouraging you to do what is right and good for your students when the system at large is not moving in that direction.*

But we face systemic difficulties from all directions. Teacher education programs are flawed. The higher education institutions that house those programs are riddled with riddled with bureaucratic obstacles and challenges. State departments of education have their own political agendas. Local school districts are plagued with staffing shortages at all levels, varying community support, structural barriers to parent and family engagement in addition to so much more.

A second participant echoed the perspective regarding the need for collaboration and belonging:

> *as systemic change - by definition - cannot be achieved through individual action.*
> *Our work towards a greater goal becomes impactful systemically, only when it is a common goal--Systemic change can only be implemented with mass movements; teachers, teacher educators, administrators, board members, policy makers, parents, and community members need to move together to give rise to change.*

Such teacher reflection speaks to at least two broader considerations for teacher educators that we continue to think through in the discussion and conclusion section. First, to what degree is teacher education's investment in current systems of preparation (e.g., school placements, district agreements, and grant monies among others) preserving the structural inequities we claim to fight against? Put another way, what do teacher education programs need to do to better articulate teacher realities, and forefront, rather than evade their own agentic ability to change systems (that structure white supremacy)? It would seem that part of this work means challenging a narrative arc that holds training individual teachers for and in social justice is sufficient for forwarding justice in education. Second, it calls to mind the idea that preparing teacher educators for social justice is much more than instruction in pedagogies of and for social justice. Teachers need a rich theoretical base as to why their work for social justice is impossible, e.g., Wilderson, (2020), and how their praxis is a political act rooted in a political context that they must continually work to understand and potentially organize against. However, teacher education programs have the ability to show how such work can be done systematically and not solely through individual initiatives of good faith.

Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion

In articulating this bad faith narrative--that even high quality teacher education programs can adequately prepare classroom teachers for the [impossible work] of public schools and that teacher education, as presently designed, is a focal lever in fighting for social change and educational justice--through the findings of three sub-themes, we now consider some essential points and considerations. We reflect on the gap that the bad narrative exposes and lays bare. Overall, there is clear evidence that school districts and university educator preparation programs aren't working in deep collaboration with each other towards radical social change, and individual teachers felt they were losing a game that everybody else told them they could win. This caused emotional (dis)regulation from classroom teachers as well as a questioning of their ability to enact equitable education transformation.

Rather than advocating for, and modeling the collective political organizing needed to change the systems that perpetuate these (impossible) ends, it appears teacher education programs are too often complicit in reproducing structural barriers. Teachers explained the ways

in which university teacher preparation faculty often avoid districts and the ways districts avoid universities; the ways that policies do not treat teachers as true professionals; the ways local restrictions limit innovation; and the way alternative collaborative practices such as informal mentoring are lacking. Thus, teachers came to believe that no teacher education program could ever prepare them for the experience of being a first-year teacher. While those who pursued a residency pathway cited a variety of preparation program features that have contributed to their feeling well-prepared for particular aspects of their work (mentor teachers, residency in the district where they work and access to tools and tech), and they described the connections they made to one another as a source of ongoing support, they also expressed the constant feeling of being overwhelmed and on an "island." Their letters and our group discussions focused on making it through the daily activities of teaching or working through the challenges of the year (moving school buildings three times in one year)—surviving.

All this speaks back to serious reflection about whether there is such a thing as high-quality teacher education when the job of teaching feels so impossible--to novice and veteran teachers alike--because it's nested within fundamentally unjust, racist, classist, able-ist, and biased systems and structures. Prospective teachers elect to enroll in teacher education programs because they believe in the power of schools to improve the lives of youth. Teacher education programs perpetuate narratives that reinforce this conviction. It is, therefore, understandable that novice teachers - especially teachers of color - feel unprepared, overwhelmed, and emotionally taxed when their experiences fail to correspond to the bad faith narratives. Instead of impugning the institutions at source of the narratives, they cast about for explanations that will sustain them (see also Monreal & Stutts, 2023).

Thinking with Wilderson's (2020) concept of "transformative promises of narrative arcs" might provide classroom teachers insight into why their jobs are impossible; in other words how the development of white hope (even humanity) is coterminous with structures of racial injustice, specifically anti-blackness. Teacher education can explicate the harm and purpose of such narrative arcs, i.e., who benefits from beliefs that teacher education alone can create social justice--and also actively critique and/or agitate against the systems that sustain them. While this alone does not solve the impossibilities of a teacher's work, it does help them better *understand* why their work is (or seems) impossible. Such understanding paired with explicit and modeled support from their teacher education programs may help teachers feel more prepared to use fugitive tools (like letter writing) to keep doing the impossible.

Hence, and in conclusion, we further propose that the methodology of letters can offer a space for teacher programs to invite candidates and program completers to interrogate and critique. By creating opportunities where time and space can interrupt power relations, teacher educators can cultivate solidarity among candidates and enhance the likelihood that genuine evaluation will occur. Developing systematic strategies for such appraisal - that is, building authentic critique of the white supremacist system into the system - has the potential to model a method for dismantling the master's house with the master's tools. While Lorde (1984) claims this attempt is perhaps itself impossible, the necessary first step is authentic comprehension of the nature of our existence. As de Beauvoir (1948) writes, "It is in the knowledge of the genuine conditions of our lives that we must draw our strength to live and our reasons for acting" (p. 101). To know the genuine conditions of our lives *requires* rejection - refusal - of the bad faith narrative that teacher education programs aim to overthrow the systems that support them.

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Classroom Management as the New Jim Crow

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> *"What has changed since the collapse of Jim Crow has less to do with the basic structure of our society than with the language we use to justify it. In the era of colorblindness, it is no longer socially permissible to use race, explicitly, as a justification for discrimination, exclusion, and social contempt. So we don't. Rather than rely on race, we use our criminal justice system to label people of color "criminals" and then engage in all the practices we supposedly left behind…We have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it"* (Alexander, 2020, p. 2).

Introduction

It's been almost twenty years since I first entered the teaching profession. When I sit and reflect on my experiences as a Black educator, I can't help but see how my positionality, and more specifically, my racial identity has influenced and intersected with my professional experiences over the years. It's almost impossible to thread the professional and racial identity apart because they are so intertwined, and I strongly suspect this is one of the many unique characteristics of being a teacher of color. But of all the teaching experiences I've had over the years, it is the first encounter–the first teaching position accepted–that I always circle back to. It's been almost 20 years since I first entered that classroom, and still many of those old memories make me smile. While I often smile thinking of that first group of students, who taught me so much about myself and the educator I wanted to become, these memories are often juxtaposed with the feelings of discomfort I had at the time, and discontentment I continue to feel in leaving behind a group of students who were victims of an unjust system.

My first teaching position was a permanent substitute teacher in a self-contained classroom at an alternative school, which meant that all the students in the school had been removed from their home school due to disciplinary issues. While the structures in place were to have students enter the alternative school setting for a few weeks to a few months in an effort to rehabilitate undesired behaviors, most of the students that I encountered had been there for years, with no hope of returning to their home schools. At the time, I didn't have the knowledge or experience to clearly articulate what I was seeing and experiencing, but I knew in my gut that something was wrong. I struggled to pinpoint these feelings of discomfort, but could never fully articulate the inherently problematic elements of my position and the system that I entered into.

When I took over the classroom in January, I became the fourth teacher in that classroom. The school was under heavily surveillance – metal detectors and multiple officers at the door, officers patrolling the hallways throughout the school day, and parole officers stopping in on a weekly basis to check on the students who were on their caseload. When I started, not only did I have an officer who regularly stood outside my classroom, but I also had a parole officer who came on a weekly basis to pull students out for their regularly scheduled check-ups. To put this into context, about a third of my class was assigned to this parole officer. But, what I also immediately noticed was that a large majority of the students at the school were Black, and that this racial proportion did not match the district nor the city demographics, which were both primarily white. We were bussing in large

numbers of Black students from all over the city to attend this alternative school setting because they were no longer welcome at their home schools. What I couldn't quite articulate back then, but clearly see now in hindsight, was that this experience was a first-hand experience with the school-to-prison nexus.

While none of my other encounters with the disproportionate rate of disciplinary action for students of color were quite this severe, I encountered remnants of the same – a disproportionate number of historically marginalized groups of students referred for behavior, often creating an escalating chain of reaction, yielding negative consequences – in every educational setting I entered as an educator. Despite the various teaching experiences I've had in other spaces, it is always this experience that comes to the forefront of my mind with lingering feelings of discontentment. While I didn't have the knowledge or words to put to this experience then, I do now. As such, I choose to use my positionality in ways that bring awareness and hopefully enact change in regards to the disparaging disparities that I have personally witnessed, and know to be true at large, when it comes to the access and opportunities for Black youth in American schools.

In an effort to empower Black youth and begin to close the discipline gap (Robbins, 2021; Milner et. al, 2019; Morris, 2016) that currently exists between Black youth and their white peers, we must critically examine and reframe the management practices used in traditional classroom spaces[8]. To effectively unpack this work, this article works to critically examine the Jim Crow-like undertones present in school policies, procedures, and disciplinary practices, as well as examine the adverse effects these practices have on Black youth in America. As such, an attempt to thread out the variables that collectively work to create *classroom management* as a construct that upholds policies and procedures will be made to fuel an attempt to identify the ways these structures work to disenfranchise Black youth and fuel the school to prison nexus. Through this examination, a connection to the ways in which bad faith narratives are created in traditional classroom spaces will be made to highlight the adverse and unjustified consequences to Black youth. To better understand this phenomenon and inequitable disciplinary practices in regards to Black youth, we have to truly understand the contributing factors and how they are interacting with the educational system in a way that creates additional obstacles and barriers for Black youth. As we continue to move towards a more equity-centered approach to classroom management, we as an educational community must interrogate and disrupt anti-Black policies and practices that have plagued schools since their inception (Marks & Sandles,2021) and come to recognize the intersection of culture and power that is present in classroom spaces, policies, and procedures.

Remnants of Jim Crow in Classroom Management Practices

Overshadowed by the horrors of slavery, the Jim Crow Era in American history tends to be less discussed. Following the ratification of the 13th and 14th amendments, which abolished slavery and established Black [9]Americans as equal citizens respectively, Jim Crow laws spread across the country as a means to maintain the status quo, reinforce racial segregation, and maintain an inferior status amongst Black citizens in America. This collection of laws stacked the legal system in a manner that marginalized and legally prevented Black citizens from voting, holding office, and accessing various jobs and educational opportunities (Robbins, 2021). While the Civil Rights Movement provided legislation that worked to eradicate these laws and legally provide more equitable opportunities for Black

[8] The term 'traditional classroom spaces" is being used to reference white settler colonialism structures and practices within the context of education.

[9] Black' is intentionally being used to be inclusive of all Black people, and not those who are American born.

Americans, obstacles similar in nature still exist, particularly in our education and criminal justice systems. As Alexander (2020) suggests, the collapse of Jim Crow did not equate to the eradication of racial discrimination, but rather forced a redesign of systemic structures in ways that allow for Jim Crow sentiments to linger in more subtle ways.

While the infamous *Brown* v. *Board of Education* legally overturned the notion that separate could be equal, working to provide more equitable opportunities for Black Americans, remnants of Jim Crow structures still exist both inside and outside of educational spaces and continue to marginalize and disenfranchise Black citizens today. Alexander (2020) argues that we use our criminal justice system as a tool to label citizens as 'criminals' and enact discriminatory practices that we claim to have left behind. But, these practices start well before entrance into the criminal justice system, as these structures and practices often exist and are enacted in school settings (Robbins, 2021; Morris, 2016). Many of the *management* systems of practice embedded in traditional educational spaces use policies and procedures as a means to disproportionately label Black youth as being defiant and/or disrespectful, initiating a domino effect of punitive, exclusionary practices that fuel the school to prison nexus (Morris, 2016; Robbins, 2021; Milner et al., 2019). Through these practices of exerted power, we allow Jim Crow-like obstacles and barriers to be created for historically marginalized groups, with Black students and citizens being identified at the highest rates (Morris, 2016; Robbins, 2021; Milner et al., 2019).

As Jim Crow laws were used to sustain order and social norms, disciplinary structures in schools operate in similar ways (Robbins, 2021). According to the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, Black youth are 3.6 times more likely to be suspended than their white peers starting as early as preschool, and this number increases as students get older (Milner et al., 2019). In 2014, The U.S. The Department of Education reported that students of color are three times more likely to be suspended or expelled than their white peers, and accounted for over 70% of disciplinary referrals, sometimes resulting in police intervention (Milner et al., 2019). While Black youth make up approximately 18% of student populations, they account for 48% of suspension rates (Milner et al., 2019).

Additionally, instead of attending college, Black males are five times more likely to go to prison (Howard, 2016). Though there are many factors attributed to the inequitable disciplinary practices in regards to Black youth. Many scholars have cited subjective teacher and administration practices, lack of educator preparation in relation to race and class, zero tolerance policies, and criminalization of school facilities as primary factors contributing to the disproportionate rate at which Black students are disciplined in educational settings (Milner et al., 2019; Morris, 2016; Wald & Losen, 2003; Mallet, 2015). Further, the lack of cultural inclusions in management practices in conjunction with the discrepancies in subjective-natured disciplinary referral patterns for Black youth demonstrates the way in which bad faith narratives work against historically marginalized populations of students. Tichavakunda (2021) describes bad faith narratives as being a phenomenon in which people choose to deceive themselves about truths in an effort to maintain their positive self-image and/or outlook on the world. These findings suggest that we can no longer study and analyze classroom management practices in isolation, but rather need to analyze and scrutinize classroom management practices with a lens that is inclusive of justice, equity, inclusion, and diversity (Milner, et al., 2019).

A Closer Examination of Classroom Management

Despite its historically large presence in the realm of teacher education and training, the evolution of classroom management practices has been slow to catch up with the growing needs of diverse populations of students (Milner et al., 2019).

Classroom management is a main pillar in teacher education programs and educator professional development training sessions (Pitsoe & Leteska, 2013). Through these standardized efforts to prepare preservice educators for the field, a core of fixed behavioral norms have been constructed and conveyed as to how classrooms should look, sound, and operate (Robbins, 2021). These norms are largely rooted in social standards that reflect white, Eurocentric cultural values and norms, and are often missing the necessary cultural lenses and inclusions needed for diverse classroom spaces. While teacher preparation programs set the stage for how preservice educators will develop their classroom management practices, is the practices are upheld through school and district policies, which mirror similar sentiments and also lack cultural lenses and inclusions. Looking specifically at the policies and procedures that work to create *[classroom] management* systems of practice within educational spaces, there is appreciable data to suggest that "Jim Crow-style discipline has taken root in classes throughout the country" (Robbins, 2021, p. 55).

In recent years, traditional classroom management practices and the construct of classroom management as a philosophical ideal have come under scrutiny. Traditional classroom management practices have largely been left up to educators to create and implement, leaving students to blindly adhere to policies and procedures (Nieto & Bode, 2018). In traditional models of classroom management, not only do educators have the authority to be able to create policies and procedures, but they also solely create and enact consequences for not adhering to the policies and procedures within their classrooms. In this way, we see an inherent sense of authoritativeness stemming from internalized dominance (Sensory & Diangelo, 2017) in that the teacher is solely in charge of the classroom space and makes all determinations as to what is and what is not acceptable behavior. That is, "the teacher disciplines, and the students are disciplined" (Nieto & Bode, 2018, p. 112). Additionally, in traditional classroom management systems, students are void from conversations and decision-making in regards to the policies governing learning spaces, formulating a sense of internalized oppression amongst students. In this way, traditional classroom management practices largely align with Freire's banking theory (Freire, 1998), in which teachers are solely in possession of the power and authority, and thus it is their responsibility to simply 'deposit' information and expectations into students, who are presumably empty vessels (Nieto & Bode, 2018). These initial power dynamics embedded in traditional classroom management practices greatly contribute to the existing discipline gap, which disproportionately and adversely affects Black students.

As Nieto and Bode (2018) state, "Most schools are more like benign dictatorships in which all decisions are made for them, albeit in what schools may perceive to be students' best interests. They are more often organized around issues of control decided, designed, and executed by others" (p. 112). As such, traditional systems of classroom management tend to promote socialization and conformity through a fixed set of policies and procedures set forth by the teacher, often leading to oppressive and exclusionary disciplinary tactics. Research demonstrates that traditional classroom management practices are rarely equitable as they disproportionately identify and work against students of color, fueling the school to prison nexus (Milner, et al., 2019; Muhammad, 2020; Morris, 2016; Robbins, 2021; Howard, 2016). Many of the findings that have emerged from recent research demonstrate a lack of cultural inclusion and have strong ties to traditional classroom management practices, which include, but are not limited to: disproportionate office referrals for students of color, the subjective nature of referrals for Black and Brown students, and disproportionate suspension and expulsion of students of color, (Milner, et al., 2019, Boutte, et al., 2021). In many ways, these adverse effects of traditional classroom management practices are rooted in cultural misunderstandings between

educators and their diverse students, resulting in cultural dissonance in classroom spaces.

Cultural Dissonance

With the research and data undeniably demonstrating that historically marginalized groups of students are disproportionately disciplined within school contexts, it is crucial that the cultural implications of classroom management practices be critically examined. While student populations continue to become increasingly diverse, educator demographics have largely remained stagnant, leading to a clash of cultures in educational spaces (Powell & Cantrell, 2001; Newberry, 2013; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Morganett, 2001; Milner et al, 2019; Muhammad, 2020). This growing cultural divide between educators and their students has increasingly presented many obstacles and challenges for educators. With the preponderance of educators in the United States identifying as white, the disruption of white, Eurocentric cultural values embedded in educational spaces is difficult to achieve. In addition, this population of educators often have had little to no exposure to the populations they serve in school settings (Skepple, 2014). This lack of familiarity between teachers and students bears itself out when teachers have limited frames of reference about distinct student communication styles and their cultural values. The absence of this familiarity has problematic effects on classroom management and often contributes to conflicts and misunderstandings in the classroom. This lack of understanding and exposure to various cultural lenses is reflected in the glaring examples of disproportionate discipline towards historically marginalized groups of students.

While classroom rules, policies, and procedures provide the foundation for effective classroom management practices, oftentimes these rules and policies are presented as being culturally and racially neutral despite actually reflecting white, middle-class cultural norms. It has become widely accepted to ignore and avoid discussing culture and race in relation to classroom practices due to fear that such discussions will alienate or polarize (Watson, Hagopian, & Au, 2018). The colorblindness narratives that permeate classroom spaces and work to construct classroom management practices intentionally take race off the table despite racialized results (Watson et al., 2018). While well-intentioned educators attempt to create cultural and racial neutrality in classroom contexts, the norms of the dominant culture become most visible when they are violated (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). Unfortunately, educational spaces are never politically, racially, or otherwise neutral. Treating the classroom as a neutral space not only ignores the inherent power dynamics present in classroom spaces, but also ignores the dynamic set of assets students bring to the classroom. As Delpit (1988) states, "to act as if power does not exist is to ensure that the power status quo remains the same" (p. 292). In ignoring the cultural values and racial or ethnic identities of students, educators are missing important dimensions of their students' identities, which hinders their opportunities to be successful in the classroom (Milner, et al., 2019). To effectively engage students, this practice must be eradicated as claiming cultural and racial neutrality makes it difficult to see the disturbing truths of what is going on in classrooms across the country.

Recognizing that the teacher-student relationship is one of the most essential elements for success in learning outcomes, it is crucial to unpack the consequences of the cultural mismatches between educators and their diverse students. It is these teacher-student disconnects that are often cited as a major reason for conflicts that arise in classroom spaces, particularly as they pertain to disciplinary tactics (Milner et al., 2019). As Milner et al (2019) states, "Because White teachers and students of color possess different racialized and cultural experiences, incongruence may serve as a roadblock for academic and social success" (20). Powell & Cantrell (2021) state, "When there is a mismatch between the culture of the school and the students' culture, there is a loss of cultural synchronization. These cultural mismatches can

be found when students' cultural ways of behaving, speaking, and dressing result in suspensions or are perceived negatively as inappropriate or threatening" (p. 2). Unfortunately, there is substantial evidence to support the claim that Black youth are disproportionately identified and targeted due to teachers' fears, cultural dissonance in classroom spaces, and/or anxiety of losing control (Robbins, 2021). These fears have the ability to turn into disciplinary actions that have adverse consequences for historically marginalized groups of students, particularly those who identify as Black. As Robbins (2021) states, "It is the teachers' fear of losing control–rather than the actual threat of experiencing danger–that elevates benign misbehavior by African-American students into proverbial mountains that appear to merit out-of school consequences" (p. 49).

Current research in the field has pointed to many inequities within classroom management systems of practice, demonstrating a disproportionate identification of historically marginalized groups of students, particularly Black youth, being identified as disruptive and/or not adhering to static classroom policies and procedures. Rules regarding hair, dress code, and ways of talking are subjective areas where Black students are often reprimanded and referred for disciplinary action (Boutee et al., 2021; Baker-Bell, 2020). In this way cultural freedoms are limited, vilified, and policed as they are treated as "antithetical to learning success" (Baker-Bell, 2020, p. 40), feeding into bad faith narratives that are upheld and reinforced through disciplinary measures and punishments. In addition to increased referral patterns, Black and Latinx students are inordinately identified as having emotional and behavioral disabilities (Moreno et al., 2014).

Citing data from the U. S Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights' Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), Delale-O'Connor et al., (2017), found that Black girls, Black boys, Latino and other non-White males continue to be the disproportionate recipients of exclusionary discipline in the form of suspensions and expulsions and that these consequences often begin with harmful classroom management strategies. Research indicates that while the referrals for white students are often objective in nature such as being tardy, referral patterns for Black and Brown students tend to be subjective in nature, such as being disrespectful, being loud, and violating the dress code related to natural hairstyles or cultural clothing. At the heart of this issue is the need to manage and control students through rigid and inflexible rules. When a failure to manage occurs, educators rely on bad faith narratives, rooted in lack of cultural knowledge and/or cultural misunderstandings, to enact disciplinary measures as a means to control students rather than to support learning and well-being. With the contrast between the preponderance of teachers being White and middle class while student populations are increasingly diverse, these subjective decisions are hardly trivial (Milner, et al., 2019).

When ineffective classroom management strategies are implemented in the classroom, it has the potential to impede the learning process (Milner et al., 2019). The consequence of punishment[10] referrals that originate in the classroom and result in the removal of students from learning spaces reduces students' access and opportunities for learning, adversely affecting student achievement (Milner, et al., 2019). In traditional classroom management systems, punishment in the form of removal from learning spaces is a widespread practice that causes harm rather than an opportunity to learn from mistakes. Punishment referrals are often the consequence of students failing to comply with rules they are simply asked to blindly adhere to, reinforcing the element of control in traditional classroom management practices. Punishment

[10] The term punishment is intentionally used here to illustrate the contrast between discipline and punishment. Punishment-based practices are harmful rather than helpful.

referrals have a striking resemblance to "prison-like" consequences for students in that they resort to exclusionary practices in an attempt to corral or control student behavior (Milner, et al., 2019). Additionally, "too often students are looked upon as the sole problem when teachers actually contribute to conflicts that occur in the classroom; consequently, punishment referrals persist" (Milner, et al., 2019).The assumption with such practices is grounded in the idea that removing the "bad" individuals from the learning space preserves the "good" individuals (Milner, et al., 2019). When traditional classroom management practices result in the removal of students from learning contexts, students are not only being punished for what educators have deemed inappropriate or poor behavior, but are also stripped away access to the curriculum and the learning environment.

Zero Tolerance Policies and the School to Prison Nexus

In addition to cultural dissonance between educators and their diverse students, zero tolerance policies have infused their way into school policies and procedures and further work to marginalize Black youth in educational spaces. The term *zero tolerance* stems from the Reagan's Administration's war on drugs, and "refers to those policies which deal out severe punishment for all offenses, no matter how minor, ostensibly in an effort to treat all offenders equally in the spirit of fairness and intolerance of rule-breaking" (Webb et al., 2006). By the 1990's zero tolerance policies found their way in educational spaces, greatly affecting policies and procedures related to school discipline (Webb et al., 2006; Skiba, 2014). At the core of these 'no nonsense' policies is the belief that strong enforcement of rules and policies will act as a deterrent for disruptions (Skiba, 2014). While zero tolerance policies were created to support a war on drugs, some experts suggest that these policies are waging war on American youth, particularly those who are people of color (Webb et al., 2006; Marrus, 2015).

While zero tolerance policies still linger in schools across the nation, there is little evidence that these policies are effective. On the contrary, most evidence suggests the opposite and paints an alarming picture. With the onset of zero tolerance school policies has come the rise in disproportionate disciplinary action against Black youth. Skiba (2014) notes that in just three years after implementing zero tolerance policies in Chicago, Illinois, the number of expulsions rose from 81 expulsions to 1,000. States such as Florida, Pennsylvania, and many others had similar data (Skiba, 2014). Since the inception of zero tolerance policies the number of expulsions across the country has doubled, while tripling for Black youth specifically (Skiba, 2014). Not only are Black youth being disproportionately referred for subjective disciplinary infractions, but they are also more likely to receive punishment-like and exclusionary consequences. Exclusionary disciplinary tactics remove students from classroom environments, stripping away their access to learning opportunities. As Marrus (2014) states, "Suspensions and expulsions lead to serious consequences such as missed learning days, the loss of educational opportunities, and referrals to the juvenile justice system" (p. 34). Despite ample evidence demonstrating that out of school suspensions and expulsions do not improve the rate of disruption, schools continue to implement these harmful policies and practices (Skiba, 2014).

While these statistics are alarming in their own right, the consequences of such actions have dire consequences for the future of Black youth. Zero tolerance policies have created a slew of obstacles and barriers for Black youth in regards to access to education, and are also fueling the school to prison nexus. This 'get tough' approach to school discipline strongly mirrors the criminal justice system, which also has a disproportionate number of Black youth and other historically minoritized groups represented. Wald & Losen (2003) point out that the eerily similar racial disparities between school discipline and the criminal justice system is so similar that it is impossible to not look at the two systems

together and critically analyze the ways in which they influence one another and have become interdependent. In addition to recognizing the racial disparities present in school discipline and the criminal justice system, we have to acknowledge that the single greatest predictor for arrest is being suspended, expelled or held back in school (Wald & Losen, 2003). Additionally, zero-tolerance policies have exponentially increased the number of juvenile referrals and arrests (Mallett, 2015). In many ways, the onset and continued implementation of zero tolerance policies has worked to solidify the school to prison nexus (Marcus, 2015).

Zero-tolerance policies "have dramatically increased the number of students put out of school for disciplinary purposes, and may be accelerating student contact with law enforcement" (Skiba, 2014, p. 27). The school to prison nexus concept is based on ample evidence found to support the likeliness of students being incarcerated as young adults or adults increases with their rate of adverse, exclusionary disciplinary actions such as suspensions and expulsions. Under zero tolerance policies, "Both male and female youth are being arrested in substantial numbers for behavior that, before these preventative measures, would have likely been handled as a school disciplinary matter" (Webb et al., 2006, p. 4). Recognizing the dire consequences of this shift, Skiba (2014) reminds us that each year we rely on this harmful, exclusionary practices is another year that the educational career and overall student success is potentially disrupted, "moving students away from educational success and towards increased contact with the justice system" (p. 31).

Appreciable data exists supporting the notion that these disproportionate disciplinary practices found in traditional educational spaces feed into the school to prison nexus. "Schools and prisons are linked in powerfully tangible ways in the United States–in particular through underfunded urban schools and the primarily Black and Brown students they serve" (Milner et al., 2019).

Unfortunately, the connections among our educational system, legal system, and Black youth intertwine in alarming ways and directly contribute to the criminalization of Black children (Marrus, 2015).

Recommendations

With remnants of Jim Crow exclusionary practices present, many classroom management practices and their consequences have adverse effects for Black youth and other historically marginalized groups of students. Black youth, in particular, are not only disproportionately identified and referred for subjective infractions in school, but are more likely to receive punishment-oriented consequences, often including removal from learning spaces. While the data on classroom management and disciplinary practices support claims and reinforce the injustices faced by Black youth, what is not discussed is the way in which these trends lead to not only an issue with our disciplinary structures in education, but also to a larger issue– *a Civil Rights issue*–in regards to the quality of educational experiences for Black youth across the U.S.. When we use subjective norms for disciplinary referrals and dole out harsh punishments for consequences, the true injustice is the removal from classroom settings. Studies (Milner et al., 2019) have shown that students who are removed from learning spaces through suspension or expulsion are more likely to have repeat offenses and difficulties in achieving their learning goals. This pattern of discipline and consequence creates a downward spiral, producing an ever-growing school to prison nexus.

While culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogical practices has become widely accepted, this infusion of cultural inclusivity into instruction has not permeated management practices and structures with the same rigor and enthusiasm. Our willingness as an educational community to overlook inequities by claiming race neutrality is, by definition, one of the many ways we create and uphold bad faith narratives that lead to adverse outcomes for historically marginalized groups of students.

As classroom management comes under constant scrutiny in contemporary society, traditional notions of discipline and management must be rigorously interrogated to align with newfound thinking on equity-infused classroom spaces. Utilizing the same logic behind culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies, we need an urgent call for culturally responsive classroom management systems of practice. Extending this diversity, equity, and inclusionary lens to classroom management practices can have a profound impact on classroom interactions, learning outcomes, and disciplinary referrals. While this issue is multifaceted with complexities, the recommendations offered here will focus on what educators can begin doing to work against larger structures of inequities.

Critical Self-Reflection

As educators, our first and most crucial step is to actively work to recognize the power embedded in our positions. In recognizing that Black students are disproportionately harmed in traditional classroom practices, educators need to critically examine the ways in which their cultural identities and values may influence their classroom management practices and policies, and further, what the consequences and experiences may be for those not sharing the same cultural identity or values as the educators.(Milner et al., 2019).

This critical reflection is crucial because educators tend to teach through frames that make sense in their culture, oftentimes not recognizing the important features and needs of students who have different cultural values (Milner et al., 2019). This can lead to educators unknowingly contributing to the classroom management problems that arise particularly with students who are racially, ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse (Milner et al., 2019). Critical self-reflection "should acknowledge that teachers' beliefs about how a well-managed classroom should look are shaped by their cultural identities and cultural values and that many classroom management practices intended to create order by U.S. teachers express White middle-class values (Cartledge et al., 2014; Weinstein et al., 2004)" (Milner et al., 2019, p. 62).

Engaging in critical self-reflection allows educators the space to explore and become familiar with the ways in which their racial or ethnic background, socioeconomic status, gender, and/or political beliefs have shaped them as people and educators (Milner et al., 2019). This equity-based focused-reflection involves posing tough questions to truly understand the many facets of teacher and personal identity. In reflecting on the ways in which their "beliefs, privileges, issues, and experiences that have shaped them and their perception of others, educators can become more aware of how their approaches to classroom management need to shift in order to better meet the needs of their students" (Milner et al., 2019, p.62). Further, the practice of critical self-reflection should be taught and modeled for students as it provides opportunity for all classroom community members to reflect on their beliefs, actions, and experiences (Milner et al., 2019). This collective effort can work to strengthen classroom community, environment, and overall social context in the classroom (Milner et al., 2019).

Building upon critical self-reflection, educators and students can co-construct norms in the classroom and co-develop rules and policies. This joint construction of classroom norms and policies can empower students in meaningful ways. When students are able to help with the construction of classroom norms and policies, they become more invested in the maintenance of the classroom community and more aware of disruptions to the co-constructed norms. Through the co-development of classroom norms and policies, educators can scaffold students to consider a social contract for the classroom. Social contracts are co-constructed norms and policies created by students and educators. Once the agreed upon norms and policies have been developed, all in the classroom community commit to adhering to the co-constructed norms. This social contract should then be used as a regular conversation piece when discussing norms, policies,

procedures. Educators can use the social contract as a foundation for conversations regarding the adherence and/or disruption of the agreed upon norms. Regularly circling back to reinforce the social contract, and using the social contract as the foundation to discuss disruptions to the agreed upon norms and policies, helps all members of the classroom community stay committed to what was constructed and agreed upon. This practice works to create a strong foundation for other equity-centered management practices, including restorative management practices.

Restorative Classroom Management Practices

Traditional classroom management systems tend to reflect a punitive discipline system, in that they often center solely upon teacher or school-created rules of governance and consequences that often lead to the removal of students from the classroom or overall school community (Milner et al., 2019). Equity-based classroom management systems should reflect restorative practices when co-constructed classroom norms are violated.

Restorative discipline is a relationship-oriented approach grounded in the ideology that students should have the space to make mistakes and learn from them (Milner, et al., 2019). Milner et al. (2019) identifies five goals of restorative discipline as it relates to the classroom, which include: building positive relationships, reducing and preventing harmful behavior, resolving conflict and holding people accountable, repairing harm, and addressing and discussing the needs of the school community. The five goals of restorative discipline can be met using restorative practices such as affective language, circle process, and conferences (Milner et al., 2019). Restorative practices are crucial in supporting students because they are rooted in keeping students in the classroom rather than removing students from the learning space. Restorative practices "provide a means of disrupting and ending years of discriminatory practices that have adversely affected children in urban schools," (Milner et al., 2019, p. 134). A natural consequence of this disruption in discriminatory disciplinary practices in the classroom is that there is also a disruption in the school-to-prison nexus.

When problematic behavior is discussed in terms of the co-constructed classroom social contract and addressed through restorative discipline, students are afforded the opportunity to take responsibility, learn from their mistakes, and make amends to those who may have been affected or harmed. A critical element of this practice is that it affords students the opportunity to remain in the learning space and reestablish themselves in good standing with the classroom community. This makes it more likely for students to stay engaged in learning opportunities and the classroom community and provides dignity and a sense of agency to students. In this manner, restorative discipline works to disrupt the pattern of detentions, suspensions, and expulsions that traditionally fuel the school-to-prison nexus (Milner et al., 2019). Rather than excluding students from the classroom community when their actions do not align with the norms, restorative practices allow students to remain in the classroom, engage in critical reflection and conversation to rectify the harm caused, and work to build a stronger classroom community.

The benefits of restorative disciplinary practices extend beyond those who violate the agreed-upon norms of the classroom, they positively affect all members of the learning community. In addition to empowering students who have disrupted the classroom norms, those affected by the disruptive behavior are also empowered. In traditional classroom management systems, those affected by the disruptive behavior are excluded from the conversation and consequences associated with the disruptive behavior. Conversely, when restorative discipline is used, those affected by the disruptive behavior are empowered by being included in the conversation and are given a voice as to how amends can potentially be made. This dialogue among members of the collective

learning community supports the notion that students are members of the classroom community, and thus, their actions affect other community members (Milner et al., 2019). Not only does the implementation of restorative discipline positively affect students, but it also allows educators to learn and grow from the process. Restorative discipline moves away from the traditional model of educators correcting behavior based on subjective interpretations of teacher-created rules to allow an opportunity for educators to facilitate a discussion based on co-created classroom norms. Additionally, the infusion of social contracts and restorative practices into the classroom management structure moves away from traditional reactive procedures to more effective preventative procedures.

In thinking about restorative practices in conjunction with Delpit's (1988) tenets of the culture of power, it is evident that restorative practices work to disrupt the culture of power in a similar manner as social contracts. The two practices are most effective when used together as a means to be inclusive and supportive of students in the creation of equity-based classroom culture. While the co-construction of social contracts works to initially disrupt traditional power dynamics in classroom spaces, restorative classroom practices in conjunction with the revisiting of social contracts uphold and rebalance power dynamics between educators and students for a more equitable distribution and access of power.

Conclusion

As we move forward and advocate for the educational experiences of Black youth and other historically marginalized populations of students, we must be willing to push aside bad faith narratives and work to identify and address the inequities present in our education system. We can no longer discuss issues pertaining to education in race and politically neutral ways, as power dynamics present in educational spaces largely hinge on various cultural components. We as educators must be willing to engage in critical self-reflection and committed to learning and understanding our power and privileges as well as the effects of such privileges on the diverse populations of students we serve. If we want to change this landscape for the betterment of educational opportunities for Black youth, we must be willing to take the first step and identify these problems for what they are – a Civil Rights issue in education.

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It's Been a Minute! Why teachers are still not equipped to disrupt linguistic injustice in the classroom

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Abstract

While researchers and practitioners alike have evidence that American schools are rife with linguistic injustices and despite 50 years of policies, statements, and calls-to-actions, little linguistic change has been made in the classroom. This paper begins by examining the reasons why teachers are not equipped with the linguistic knowledge they require to support and serve their students, and why linguistic justice has failed to be enacted in schools and teacher preparation programs. Following this, the author presents a description of and results from replication of an empirical study first published in *Linguistics and Education* by researchers Blake and Cutler (2003). The author then compares results from the replicated mini study exploring teacher attitudes toward African American English (AAE) in the current educational climate it to the results found in the original study, and ultimately asks, how much time is needed before progress against linguistic injustice can be made?

Introduction

> *You always told me 'It takes time.' It's taken my father's time, my mother's time, my uncle's time, my brothers' and my sisters' time. How much time do you want for your progress?*
> James Baldwin, *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket* (1989)

Educational policy, funding, and curriculum all have a significant effect on student achievement. Linguists have also pointed to teachers' attitudes on language as another factor that impacts student success, especially for African American students. In fact, substantial research has shown that teachers' attitudes and behaviors are directly linked to their students' academic performance (Blake & Cutler, 2003; Foster, 1992; Taylor, 1973;). Moreover, Black students rarely speak Standard English (SE) with their teachers, putting them at a disadvantage.

Educators, theoretical linguists, and cultural theorists have all argued that American schools are rife with linguistic injustices (Baker-Bell, 2020; Boutte et. al, 2021; Love, 2019; Peele-Eady & Foster, 2018; Rickford & Rickford, 2000; Smitherman, 1977; Wheeler, 2016, 2019). They claim that certain languages are privileged and encouraged in the classroom, while others are overlooked and not given the same type of attention. This can lead to students feeling left out or not as valued and can have a negative impact on their academic performance. Major policies changes have not addressed this injustice. Two of the most well-known solutions to this injustice are the class action lawsuit against the Ann Arbor School District in 1979 and the Oakland School Board Ebonics decision in 1996 (Boutte et. al, 2021). A review of literature from the past five decades (Boutte et. al, 2021; Foster, 1992; Love, 2019; Peele-Eady & Foster, 2018; Smitherman, 1977) shows that policies and practices have not changed in the past 50 years. More recently, in 2020, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), along with the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), demanded Black language justice (https://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/demand-for-black-linguistic-justice). No matter how well-intentioned these policies, statements, or calls-to-action may be, none of them address the underlying problem: systemic racism.

Systemic oppression of Black people in the United States is well documented (Feagin, 2014), and linguistic prejudice falls under that oppression. The way Black people speak is entwined with identity and African American English (AAE) stands as a symbol of the culture (Rickford & Rickford, 2000). You cannot separate a group of people from the language they speak; language is inherent in any discussion around Black folx. Alim and Smitherman (2012) use the term "languaging race" (p. 3) to describe the process of examining the politics of race through language, and posit that language is crucial to any discussion about race. And ultimately, the discussion about AAE in schools is about just that--race.

It then becomes a question of, if we know these things about language and know we are harming Black students by not valuing their way of speaking, why do teachers continue to do this? What's stopping language research from reaching schools and classrooms? Rebecca Wheeler (2016), linguist and scholar, echoes what many others have said (for example, Alim, Baker-Bell, Delpit, Godley, Rickford, Smitherman): when the "linguistic rubber" (p.369) meets the road, efforts to implement linguistic knowledge in public schools have not been successful. In public schools, there are seemingly ubiquitous efforts to increase awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion, but linguistic knowledge has not been imparted. In addition to Wheeler's (2016) assessment that current standards, tests, and curriculum materials are designed to follow Standard English rules and allow for no variation, I would like to add a second dimension to Wheeler's assessment. After working in K-12 education for almost 20 years, I can attest to the absence of professional development around language. As an educator who followed a traditional path to teaching, I can also attest to the fact that my own preservice program and the programs of my colleagues in general did not teach anything about language. Currently, teachers are not equipped with the linguistic knowledge they require to support and serve their students.

As an English teacher by trade, I assumed I knew a lot about language when I entered my classroom. Not until 15 years in the classroom and two teaching degrees later, did I take a single course in linguistics. This course, African American English in Schools and Society, was an elective in my PhD program. I never had a single class centered around language in my Master of Arts in Teaching program, or in my school administrator courses. I never had a single professional development session in language at any of the three school districts, across three states, that I have taught in. I was woefully unprepared to serve my students' linguistic needs, as were many of my colleagues.

The readings I encountered in the AAE course illuminated this glaring lack of language knowledge. Researchers have long been interested in examining teachers' attitudes toward language, and their relationship with AAE. Blake and Cutler (2003) conducted a case study that examined teachers' attitudes toward African American English (AAE). Their study analyzed the attitudes of teachers at five distinct schools within a large Metropolis, with a linguistically diverse population. The schools in Blake and Cutler's (2003) study were served distinctly different student demographic groups, e.g., a bilingual school, an inner-city school, a self-choice school, etc. The impetus for their study sprang from the discussion around Ebonics in the late 1990s. The Oakland School Board Decision brought AAE to the forefront of not only the mind of educators, but of the general public, and they felt that it was an "opportune time" (Blake & Cutler, 2003, p. 166) to conduct a school survey around language. The researchers were influenced by Taylor's (1973) seminal study of 422 teachers' attitudes toward AAE. He looked at several variables like geographic location, sex, race, teaching experience, and grade taught. Not surprisingly, Taylor's results showed that 40 percent of respondents expressed negative feelings toward the structure and usefulness of AAE, and 20 percent reported feeling neutral. This is not surprising as AAE has long been thought of as a dialect without

structure or conventions, as a lazy or sloppy way of speaking (Smitherman, 1977). Although linguists have argued that belief is just a myth, teachers are slow to embrace the idea.

While teacher attitudes have been slow to change, curriculum and policies surrounding the validity of bidialectalism have been even slower. Blake and Cutler (2003) posit that there is a "correlation between teachers' attitudes and the degree and/or nature of language arts programs and policies at the school-level" (p. 163). This speaks to the importance of a well-structured school curriculum that honors and values AAE. Even if teachers' attitudes improve, if teacher practice remains the same, Black children will continue to be subjected to linguistic prejudice (Wheeler, 2019).

Therefore, some two decades after Blake and Cutler's (2003) study, and almost five decades after Taylor's (1973) original study, I examine teachers' attitudes toward AAE to determine: Have teachers' attitudes toward AAE changed significantly over the last 20 years? My study replicates the original two studies, but on a much smaller scale. I look at teachers' attitudes in a school that I am intimately familiar with because I work there. When reading the original study, I knew I wanted to replicate it in some way. There are many similarities between my current district and the schools that Blake and Cutler (2003) studied. With over 160 schools in the district, there is at least one school that would fit in each one of their identified categories. I also wanted my unique status as a teacher-researcher, and a school insider, to allow me to be a part of the linguistic changes that need to occur at the school level, regardless of what current teacher beliefs show.

Literature Review

The extant literature on legitimizing AAE in schools repeatedly shows the same thing: AAE is not recognized or supported--with funding or curriculum--in schools. In the following sections, I review how the case for improved teacher education around language has been an ongoing topic of research for the last 50 years. The existing literature along more recent articles about AAE in P-12 education reveal, that despite decades of research, the idea that AAE is substandard persists.

Making the Case for Linguistic Knowledge

The idea that teachers need to have a basic knowledge of linguistics and ongoing training around language began to take hold in the 1970s (Baker-Bell, 2020; Lee, 2006), perhaps beginning with a special issue of the statement published by NCTE, the National Council for the Teachers of English, a 100-year-old educational organization. The statement entitled, "Students Right to Their Own Language" (STROL), released in 1974, outlined the need for students' home languages to be recognized and supported in schools. The document included common misconceptions about varieties and suggested alternate approaches that teachers could take around how they approached language. While the claim was made that, "All English teachers should, as a minimum, know the principles of modern linguistics, and something about the history and nature of the English language in its social and cultural context" (STROL, 1974), there was no clear path for how teachers were to obtain that knowledge. Instead, teachers were left to discover what they needed to know about language through additional coursework, independent reading, and professional development, all of which take time and money. Each subsequent decade saw more published research (Fillmore & Snow, 2000; Heath, 1983; Paris, 2009; Phillips, 1993) that illuminated this "teacher education gap" (Love, 2019, p. 126), but again, no systematic change was made where it mattered--in the classroom, with students and teachers. The argument that prospective educators are not receiving the linguistic education they need to adequately serve students who speak other than SE continues to appear in more recent research (Baker-Bell, 2020; Love, 2019; Wheeler, 2019

Language Policy and African American English (AAE)

Teachers have little training in linguistics in general, and even less in AAE specifically (Diehm & Hendricks, 2021). Furthermore, when language policies are put in place in schools, AAE is included in a cursory way, or not at all. AAE is intentionally left out of language policy discussions due to historical racism and continued anti-Black sentiment in schools and society (Baker-Bell, 2020; Boutte et al, 2021). Even when policy decisions are made regarding AAE (e.g., the Ann Arbor Black English case, the Ebonics decision in Oakland), there is no federal funding offered to schools in support of language instruction around AAE. Federal funding via Title I, II, and III programs could be used to support addressing anti-Black linguistic violence (Baker-Bell, 2020), but because of long held racist beliefs (Baker-Bell, 2020; Boutte et. al., 2021; Love, 2019; Rickford & Rickford, 2000; Smitherman, 1997), this is yet to occur in any systematic way.

Another important theme explicated in the literature is that even when research on AAE has been published, much of it has been shoddy, or otherwise debunked (Peele-Eady & Foster, 2018). However, this research continues to pervade not only the academy, but also society, because of deficient attitudes toward AAE and its speakers. Black scholars are keen to point out the racism that exists in society, and the lack of sufficient language policy for AAE. Foster (1997) states, "Regardless of what some may think about African American English, it is not substandard or deficient, nor does it in and of itself interfere with students' cognitive abilities, as some extremists have claimed" (p. 10). Lee (2006) echoes the sentiment by saying, "…despite this body of empirical research, AAEV in particular continues to be viewed as an obstacle to academic learning" (p. 307). Boutte et al. (2021) further the argument by positing, "Teacher education programs are complicit in this process by their omission of AAL as a valid language system" (p. 233). Conversely, when teachers are given the opportunity to complete training on AAE, they report more confidence in assessing and instructing students in AAE (Diehm & Henricks, 2021). It then follows that teachers of students who speak AAE stand to gain the most from the implementation of comprehensive language policies, yet still, some 50 years after STROL, none are in place.

Methodology

Theoretical Grounding

Since Black language *is* Black culture (Rickford & Rickford, 2000), it follows that sociocultural theory is an appropriate lens with which to explore the continued stigmatization of AAE in schools. Sociocultural theories are concerned with issues of power in life's interactions, both human-to-human, and human-to-system or institution (Brock, 2023). American schooling, by design, has perpetuated the narrative that AAE speakers are the "undesirable Other; the 'problem student'" (Delfino, 2021, p. 102). Inoue (2019) calls this white language supremacy, and posits that all students, regardless of their language backgrounds, are indoctrinated with white languaging practices, or what we know as Standard English.

I problematize education's unwritten rule that Standard English is the only acceptable norm in which to speak and write, much like Foucault problematized "modern forms of knowledge as they are built into various social institutions" (Brock, 2023, p. 126). Language policies that dismiss AAE, or ignore it completely, are part of the anti-Black, bad faith narrative that pervades American schools.

The Instrument

The questions used for the survey were taken directly from Blake and Cutler (2003). The researchers state that they culled questions developed by Hoover et. al (1996) and Taylor (1973). There was an effort made to distinguish between bilingualism, individuals who control two languages, and bidialectalism, individuals who control two distinct dialects of the same language. My instrument differs from Blake and Cutler's in two ways. First, I

broadened the demographic categories. Since I was working with a much smaller sample size (n=17), I wanted to make the age range and years taught range larger. A larger range allowed for more anonymity for the respondents. This is important because as an insider at the school, I wanted respondents to feel comfortable knowing their identity was protected from the researcher (me). Second, the survey included a question that asked respondents, "Do you know what bidialectal means?", followed by a section titled, "Definitions of terms used in survey" (see below).

Bilingualism--refers to individuals controlling two languages

Bidialectalism--describes the ability of individuals to control two distinct dialects of the same language (Blake & Cutler, 2003)

Standard English--the form of the English language widely accepted as the usual correct form (Oxford English Dictionary)

Secondary school practitioners generally have little to no training in linguistics. I felt it was important to include a section where linguistic terms were defined. I do not think it altered the outcome of the responses in any significant way.

Respondents were given a Likert-type scale where they were to rank their feelings on the statements from: (a) Agree Strongly, (b) Agree Mildly, (c) No Opinion, (d) Disagree Mildly, (e) Disagree Strongly. In my tabulations, I again followed Blake and Cutler (2003) by tallying the responses more simply as: positive (agree strongly or agree mildly), neutral (no opinion), or negative (disagree strongly or disagree mildly). Although condensing the categories could allow for limitations, most of my respondents chose the more extreme version of the feeling (strongly), whether it was positive or negative. As Blake and Cutler (2003) recognize, "our survey is not a perfect tool, but it has been used in prior studies and can function as an effective heuristic" (p. 168).

Setting and Participants

The setting for the study is a middle school in a large, urban, Midwestern/Southern school district. This middle school serves 767 students in grades 6 through 8. The school is Title I eligible at 80% economically disadvantaged. The school's demographics are almost at equal percentages when it comes to white (non-Hispanic) students (41.2%) and Black students (39.2%). The Hispanic population at the school has recently risen to double digits (10%) after many years of single digit percentage numbers. These demographics show the trend that has occurred at the school over the last several years: the numbers for students of Color at the school is slowly but steadily climbing. The participants are 6th through 8th grade teachers at the school. The faculty demographics do not mirror the student makeup as more than 70% of the staff is white. The faculty also leans female at almost 60%. This is just one school in a large, urban district, and the limitation of the sample size cannot be ignored. However, this school's demographics and Title I status are the same as 11 of the 24 total middle schools.

The survey was sent out to 41 teachers via email. I explained to teachers, both in-person and via email, that I am a doctoral student who is doing research on teachers' attitudes about language. I also explained that this survey was not part of my role at the school or the district, and that their participation was completely voluntary. (The building administrator approved the sending of surveys.).Lastly, I made sure to specify that the survey was to be completed on their own time. The survey was emailed as a Google Form because teachers at the school are familiar with Google Forms, and I wanted to remove all barriers to completion. I gave them 11 total days to respond to the survey. 17 respondents completed the survey by the deadline (41% response rate). Due to the small-scale nature of the study, I used the export to spreadsheet feature on Google Forms and hand tabulated the results.

Results

Although the data set for this study is on a small scale, the results do reflect much of what the existing literature has shown about teachers' attitudes toward language. It also shows that teachers continue to hold conflicting ideas about language, AAE in particular, or do not know enough to hold an informed position. There are five attitudinal questions (Survey questions 3, 6, 9, 16, and 18; see appendix) that were the most interesting to me either because they revealed contradictions in educator belief and practice, or the results revealed the same answer regardless of race and/or gender. For that reason, those are the results I focus my discussion on.

Of the 17 respondents, eight were males and nine were females. There were 11 white and six Black respondents. Only two respondents had fewer than five years of teaching experiences. Age demographics showed eight respondents were in the 21-46 age range, seven were 42-57, and one respondent was 58+ years old. Respondents, regardless of age, gender, or race, all agreed that "People speak differently in different situations" (Survey question 1) and "In every language, there are always variations in the way people from different age, class, and ethnic backgrounds speak" (Survey question 2). Respondents overwhelmingly disagreed that "African American English is lazy English" (Survey question 9) at 82.3%. Interestingly, when asked to rate agreement with the statement, "Black students have language problems similar to those of students learning English for the first time" (Survey question 16) over half of the respondents either disagreed (47%) or had no opinion (29%).

Respondents believe that both bilingual ("Bilingual education is the right of every child who does not speak the dominant language") and bidialectal education ("Bidialectal education is the right of every child who does not speak the dominant language or dialect") is a right for all students at 82% and 71%, respectively. Only four white respondents said "Yes" when asked if they knew what bidialectal means. I anticipated this, and for this reason, I included the definitions at the beginning of the survey and assume that respondents used those terms to help them make decisions about the statements. A little over half (59%) of the respondents disagree that "Standard English is dominant in schools and businesses because it is the best form of English" (Survey question 18), with the rest of respondents having "No Opinion" at (29%). There was one person, a white, middle-aged (42-47) female who responded "Agree Mildly" to survey question 18.

Discussion

The respondents' answers to the statements give insight into currently held teacher beliefs about language. Respondents believe that bilingual education is the right of every child (82%). This is not surprising for a school that has seen an increase in its English Language Learner population. It also mirrors what Blake and Cutler (2003) found in their study: that schools with developed language programs indicate "the strongest feelings about bilingual education being the right of children" (p. 173). Overall attitudes in their study showed that only 49% of respondents believed that bilingual education is the right of every child. The same shift in positive attitude is seen when asked about bidialectal education. Respondents in my study feel positively toward bidialectal education as the right of every child at 71%. In 2003, Blake and Cutler showed only 22% believed that bidialectal education is the right of every child. The results show a positive attitude change toward recognizing language varieties and appreciating them.

Respondents tend to disagree (59%) that Standard English is the best form of English, although, in the very next question they agree (59%) that "One purpose of school is to make certain that all students graduate proficient in Standard English" (Survey Question 19). The contradiction in these responses is evident. The contradiction that exists today is the same as Blake and Cutler (2003) saw 20 years ago: teachers agree that one of the purposes of school is to make sure that students are proficient

in Standard English, even while agreeing that Standard English is not the best form of English. I agree with Blake and Cutler (2003) when they say that "our results suggest that there is a lack of clarity regarding the role of AAE in the classroom" (p. 178). This lack of clarity is shown in the survey results, but more importantly, the lack of clarity is seen in teacher practice. This points to the idea that even if attitudes change, unless school practices are affected, the ideas live in theory alone.

Interestingly, most respondents either disagreed (47%) or had no opinion (29%) when asked about the statement, "Black students have language problems similar to those of students learning English for the first time" (Survey question 16). At first glance it may seem that teachers do not want to conflate a bilingual student and a bidialectal student, however, I posit that something more nefarious is evident in this result. Teachers are still reluctant to recognize that Black students speak AAE as their home language, like English Learners (EL). By doing this, though, teachers are "determining which linguistic exchanges and discourses are valuable and, by association, which students have worth and value" (Rymes & Anderson, 2004, p. 110). In their study, Blake and Cutler (2003) concluded something similar: that the "greater concern for issues surrounding bilingualism than for bidialectalism" has consequences for bidialectal students (p. 190). With this belief, whether consciously or not, teachers are saying that they do not believe Black students' language is as worthy.. Responses from participants from this particular school show some attitude change has occurred, though the change is small, and in many ways, meaningless, if it does accompany curriculum change.

Conclusion

In this mini-study I examined teachers' attitudes toward AAE at an urban middle school; the purpose of which was to follow the earlier study by Blake and Cutler (2003). While this study was on a much smaller scale and in a much different urban city, the findings reflect the same concerns for speakers of AAE that were heralded 20 years ago, and even 50 years ago (Taylor, 1973): AAE is not recognized as legitimate language in the educational system.

Researchers have repeatedly argued for national policy and national funding around AAE, for programmatic language changes to occur, for more training for both pre-service teachers and current practitioners, for the implementation of culturally responsive curriculum, and for education around ways to equip teachers to recognize and value students' home dialect (Peele-Eady & Foster, 2018; Wheeler, 2019; Rickford & Rickford, 2000; Smitherman, 2000).

These scholars and countless others have rung the alarm about how "our traditional English instruction directly and seriously harms students" who speak linguistic varieties (Wheeler, 2019, p. 109). Until teachers, schools, and ultimately, society can acknowledge as legitimate and appreciate the various ways of speaking that students bring to the classroom, the harm will continue.

Ultimately, the question Baldwin (1989) poses, how much time do you want for your progress, is one that remains, decades later. Why does educational progress for Black children remain unarrived? In her recent book, Love (2023) points to education reformers who have used coded language to hide the enactment of coded policies that are meant to hold back Black and Brown children from achieving at the same rates as white children. Numerous scholars (for example, Alim, Feagin, Ladson-Billings, Ravitch) have echoed these same sentiments, but still, the bad faith narrative remains. In fact, the narrative has grown even more insidious, disguising itself as curriculum control and book bans. Headlines such as "Four things schools won't be able to do under 'critical race theory' laws," "Challenges to library books continue at record pace in 2023," and "War of words: The fight over banning books," have made their way into almost every news outlet in the country (Pendharkar, 2021; Italie, 2023; Teichner, 2023). As Love (2023)

argues, this is just the newest way for so-called education reformers to distract from the work of true equality for Black students.

Finally, the realization that the work is not *out there* in the abstract, but *right here*, at home, is perhaps the most important implication of this mini study. As a teacher-researcher, it is my duty to heed the call that Smitherman (1977) shouted long ago: "…this vitally needed scientific information has not filtered down to precisely the place where it could have the greatest impact–the public school" (p. 191). Fortunately, scholars have put forward concrete methods in which to dismantle linguistic prejudice, such as, interrogating our grading practices to resist dominant language ideology (Wheeler, 2019): adopting pedagogical innovations like Anti-Racist Black Language Pedagogy (Baker-Bell, 2019): and implementing the Heuristic for Thinking About Culturally Responsive Teaching (HiTCRiT) (Foster et al., 2020). All are recent transformative ways to change classroom practice.

Further research on this topic would include looking at other schools within this district, particularly at schools with large populations of students who are learning English. And asking: Are teachers in those schools more understanding and respectful of language differences? Does the curriculum and policy of the school reflect that understanding, and if so, how can that be replicated in other district schools? Getting the knowledge—whether it is linguistic theory or practical strategies—down to the teacher level has been, and will continue to be, a problem until teachers decide to take up this work on their own. Waiting for the federal government to provide funding for bidialectal education or hoping for curriculum change is fruitless. This will take a grassroots effort by teachers who are willing to transform the language policies at their schools because linguistic change always has, and always will, come from the people (Smitherman, 1977).

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Appendix

A Likert-Scale will be used for the following questions. Choose your level of agreement with the following statements:
Strongly Agree Mildly Agree No Opinion Mildly Disagree Strongly Disagree

1. People speak differently in different situations.
2. In every language, there are always variations in the way people from different age, class, and ethnic backgrounds speak.
3. Bilingual education is the right of every child who does not speak the dominant language.
4. Federal funds should be used to support bilingual education.
5. Some children do poorly in school because they do not speak Standard English.
6. Bidialectal education is the right of every child who does not speak the dominant language or dialect.
7. Federal funds should be used to support bidialectal education.
8. African American English (AAE), sometimes called Ebonics, is a form of English.
9. African American English is lazy English.
10. African American English is subject to its own set of rules.
11. Black kids would advance further in school without African American English (AAE).
12. Using AAE as a tool to teach subjects to Black students would hurt their chances to learn Standard English.
13. There are settings outside the classroom where African American English is appropriate.
14. It is educationally sound to use a student's first language as a way of teaching that student the standard language of a community.
15. AAE would be inadequate for teaching subjects such as social studies or math.
16. Black students have language problems similar to those of students learning English for the first time.
17. Black students should be taught in classrooms alongside English Learner (EL) students.
18. Standard English is dominant in schools and businesses because it is the best form of English.
19. One purpose of school is to make certain that all students graduate proficient in Standard English.

Resisting Grammars of Violence: How Media Discursively Sanctions Anti-Black Surveillance, Violence, and Death

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Abstract

Media shapes everyday life in U.S. society. Through the dissemination of mass media, various ideologies and intentions are shared across the nation. Starting in the seventeenth century, some of the earliest forms of media in this nation were used to surveil Black people and to sanction violence and death against their bodies. Through pushing anti-Black sentiments, the media motivates larger society through a variety of methods across time and space to exclude, silence, and eradicate Black people. A chronology of media during slavery, the Jim Crow era, and modernity reveal bad faith to be central to its sustenance.

Keywords: race, history, social, education, human, citizen, language, suffering

Introduction

> *You can attend a lynching just by opening your newspaper.*
> Kimberly Juanita Brown, Dartmouth College (2021)

> *It reminds me of something Pablo Picasso was supposed to have said to Gertrude Stein while he was painting her portrait. Gertrude said, "I don't look like that." And Picasso replied, "You will." And he was right.*
> James Baldwin (Elgrably, 1984)

> *Every time we turn on the news or log on to our social media accounts, we are forced to reengage some of our most traumatic individual and collective experiences. No other group of people in America has to routinely deal with that.*
> Marc Lamont Hill (2020, p. 57-8)

Media is the documentation and dissemination of information regarded as popular and/or integral for societal daily, seasonal, or habitual functioning. It includes "mediums as radio, television, magazines, newspapers, print ads, popular culture, and new technologies, to name a few, and represents a site of education situated outside of the traditional context of formal educational institutions" (McArthur, 2021, p. 48). Since the nation's origin, media has become ingrained within our daily lives, schemas, and cultures through mass communication. It has become a resource of the state and its people through its expansive reach and ability to connect communities, cultures, and identities who otherwise may never interact. However, the usage and reliability of media has historically been based in bad faith.

Bad faith, as described by Gilmore et al., is "grounded on people evading their humanely world responsibilities by using pleasing evidence to convince themselves (and others) that a falsehood is, in fact, true" (p. 3). By rejecting the possibility of other realities, bad faith is the intention to put faith into believing false narratives. The world of media depends on anti-Black bad faith. Various forms of media have historically disseminated and promoted methods

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of Black surveillance, displays of Black violence, or Black people as entertainment for others. Media has very rarely focused on Black identities, culture, or stories. Dumas (2010) detailed, "for the greater part of modern history, Black people were the objects and rarely the subjects of cultural representation, either absent from popular culture or stereotypically caricatured by whites with little opportunity for political rebuttal or creative response" (p. 409). In fact, mass media has acted as archival sites of Black suffering and as housing for methods of sanctioning Black people both historically and in contemporary times.

Media has long been a method of tracking Black bodies and accounting for them as means of capitol. From slave advertisements to Jim Crow segregation signs to live social media executions, media has stood the test of time as it has continually transformed and re-entered society as a key machine in regurgitating anti-Black bad faith into the American schema. Within this paper, I will investigate how various forms of media, in service of white supremacy, have been a violent tool of bad faith narratives against the Black. This investigation will engage the following questions: In an anti-Black media-dominated society, how do the historical legacies of mass media continue to act in service of state-sanctioned violence against the Black? How does the shapeshifting of media and its archives reveal the afterlife of slavery as mandated by bad faith narratives, proclamations, and stereotypes? I will interrogate the contexts of the enslavement, post-emancipation, and contemporary society as they are shaped by and related to media.

Mass media is not curated to be indulged by Black people, but instead used by the masses to surveil and police the Black through the guarantee of Black exploitation, suffering, violence, and death. Media teaches non-Black people how to engage the Black, as its language, ideologies, and intentions are shared in mass across the nation. As video and audio technology are relatively newer, some of the nation's earliest forms of engagement with media as it relates to Black people have been through print and written form. Print forms of media were the first technologies used to situate Black people as slave and non-human. Written mediums, such as advertisements, warrants, bills of sale/receipts, acted as the primary resource for surveilling and policing Black people during enslavement. These forms of media required that its recipient or audience be able to read to indulge in the item. While these media forms were about Black people, they were never meant to be consumed by the descendants of the stolen African people who were kept from learning how to read or write. Literacy, if held by the enslaved, was often seen as a danger by colonizers. As a result, the first media forms of the nation were guarded from Black people.

Even today, Black people in U.S. society still see that the media is not for us. Contemporary mass media, such as television news castings and cover pages of newspapers, consistently reveal the divide between Black vs. non-Black, or the non-human vs. human, through displays of mundane and spectacular violence. In fact, the spectacular violence against Black people is so habitual that it becomes mundane to the public eye. Hill (2020) described the spectacle as a foundational to situating the Black vs non-Black: "The spectacle of violence [is] used as a perpetual reminder that the institutions of American democracy – the law, the court system, the prisons, the police – [are] incapable of protecting Black people from white supremacist fear, rage, and violence" (p. 62). The pain and suffering that a human should never have to endure is the exact grammar of violence that is normalized on the Black – that is the Black body, psyche, identity, and community. The consistent and perpetual violence against Black people is exceptional in its spectacular form, whereas other non-Black people do not experience violence habitually, nor as extreme or in public view. The divorce of humanity from Black people is contracted through media conditioning. The conditioning trains society and its members what is acceptable towards its human citizens, and what should not

happen by any account. It is this exceptionality where the Black exists in limbo, not human or citizen, but rather susceptible to all that is savage and inhumane. Kimberly Juanita Brown described the agenda of mass media, "the default register is Blackness aligned with imminent death. Other people, other groups, other cultures can also occupy that space, but the default, for this country, is Black people." (Dartmouth College, 2021). Whether it be death, war, famine, genocide, or any other atrocities seen by the world, countries and peoples of every ethnic and cultural background have experienced these moments of disparity. However, what ultimately becomes front cover news in this society is the consistently the proximity of Blackness to death, regardless of geographical location. This consistent exposure normalizes the habitual nature of anti-Black violence and desensitizes an entire society through bad faith. Hill (2020) detailed this:

> *When we hear media stories about famine in Africa or shootings in Chicago, so many people are unmoved. It's not that people want death to occur in these places, but that they have come to 'naturally' associate these places with disaster, misfortune, violence, and premature death. This is because we only hear media stories about the continent of Africa in relation of violence and poverty. This is the same for images of anti-Black violence. The more we see it, the easier it is to be unbothered by it* (p. 58-9).

How can one imagine Black life when we have only known death to be the *guaranteed* fate? It is through the legacy of media and its many forms in which one may begin to trace the connection between bad faith narratives and anti-Blackness in this society.

Anti-Black Mass Media in the Afterlife of Slavery: Theoretical Frameworks and Definitions

> *Indeed, in contemporary public media and discourse, death is synonymous with blackness and constitutes the absolute limit of 'difference'*. Brown, 2024, p. xxii

Anti-Blackness and Afropessimism

In a society that prides itself on holding a people of many races, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, ways of living and knowing, Black people are consistently at the bottom of every hierarchy. In framing Black suffering as an institutional project, Dumas (2016) argued antiblackness scholarship interrogates the psychic and material assault on Black flesh, the constant surveillance and mutilation and murder of Black people. It also grapples with the position of the Black person as socially dead – that is denied humanity and thus ineligible for full citizenship and regard within polity. (p. 12)

While people of different backgrounds can speak to prejudice and injustices that they experience, Black people have a unique relationship to this land, in that they were the only racial group who did not immigrate here by choice. Africans were forcibly taken from their homeland and arrived in the U.S. and other places around the world as property. Anti-Blackness shapes the world in that, all that is Black is deficit, undesirable, non-standard, and non-human.

While theorizations of anti-Blackness describe how Black people are excluded from society, theorizations of Afropessimism extend further to describe how Black people are excluded from *the world* (Wilderson, 2010; Wilderson, 2020). Additionally, scholars of Afropessimism have argued that non-Black people make sense of their humanity through knowing what they are not – a slave, or Black. In the afterlife of slavery, Black people are still engaged as non-human, as human life is dependent on all that is anti-Black. Blackness is antithetical to humanity – Black exists to shape the parameters of non-Black rights and expectations within a human contract. This is especially relevant as it relates to crime. While humans (non-Black people) have a right to claim injustice or demand retribution to crime, non-humans (Black people)

have no claims or rights that are protected by law and order. Wilderson (2020) detailed further,

> *No Blacks are in the world, but, by the same token, there is no world without Blacks. The violence perpetrated against us is not a form of discrimination; it is a necessary violence; a health tonic for everyone who is not Black; an ensemble of sadistic rituals and captivity that could only happen to people who are not Black if they broke this or that 'law.'* (p. 40)

This relationship between the Black and non-Blacks, one of angst and hostility, inevitably leads a project of disrupting, dismantling, and destroying Blackness by any means. Through various forms of media across time and space, bad faith narratives have spread, attempting to provide justification for Black punishment, torture, and death. Afropessimism helps to frame the concept of *the Black.*

The Black

Dumas (2016) describes *the Black* as "the presence of Black bodies, or more precisely, the imagination of the significance of Black bodies in a certain place" (p. 13). While the African has a native land, the Black has no physical origin place, but rather find their collective history in slavery across time and space. Wilderson (2010) described the Black as "as subject who is always already positioned as Slave" (p. 7). Further, Wilderson (2010) argued, it is through the impossibilities of humanity of the Black/Slave that non-Blacks find their own bounds of possibility in freedom and life. While chattel slavery has been abolished in the U.S., the Black still exists as a slave through modernity – just in new form, the afterlife.

Afterlife of Slavery

The contemporary descendants of enslaved Africans do not experience the brutal labor of the searing pain of chattel whips and chains, yet they still may not view themselves as free. Following the non-event of emancipation proclamation, the nation then acknowledged Black people as free from slavery, able to re-enter society as citizens. However, what does 'freedom' mean for Black people post-emancipation who still are unable to safely access education and employment spaces, who often do not have stable living conditions, who are being shot down in the streets and in their own homes? Scholars across different fields have theorized this eerie, yet familiar structure in contemporary Black life as what Hartman (2007) calls the "afterlife of slavery". Hartman (2007) explained,

> *black lives are still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago. This is the afterlife of slavery--skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment* (p. 6).

While enslaved, Black people had no autonomy over their bodies, livelihood, education, or any aspect of their existence. As emancipated people, can we argue that this structure looks any different today for Black "citizens"? Feeding America (2022) stated that 1 in 5 Black people experiences food insecurity and do not have access to enough food for a sustainable healthy life. In comparison to all other racial groups, unemployment is highest amongst Black people with an 8.6% average (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023). While the lack of employment contributes to the low rates of healthcare access for Black people, Chui et al. (2021) also explain Black people also "are nearly 2.4 times more likely than White Americans to live in a neighborhood with limited healthcare services" (para. 11). Matta (2022) detailed that 71% of Black people "live in counties in violation of federal air pollution standards" (para. 1). The poor non-white districts that most Black children attend school in receive between 19-21% less funding than wealthy white districts (U.S. News & World Report, 2019). Finally, Black people are disproportionately incarcerated, as they are "imprisoned at five times the rate of whites" (Ghandnoosh, 2023). Additionally, many of these incarcerations are from crimes that carry

maximum sentences, which could legally make them slaves through the 13th amendment. In a world where the Black is no longer on an auction block, what does emancipation mean when Black reality is where imprisonment and violence thrives, where education, housing, good health is always out of reach, where death is always lurking? This is the afterlife of slavery.

Bad Faith

Bad faith is a form of deception ideology. Anti-Black violence is facilitated by way of bad faith. Bad faith not only informs the experience of the Black, but also the non-Black world, including media spaces. Gordon (1995) described, bad faith can "be shown to be an effort to deny blackness within by way of asserting the supremacy of whiteness. It can be regarded as an effort to purge blackness from the self and the world, symbolically and literally" (p. 6). Bad faith is not simply an act of an individual, but rather a collective organizing in un-truths which aim to shape institutions and the world as we know it.

It is through narratives of bad faith that the anti-Black world is formed and maintained. As described by Gilmore et al. (2021), the anti-Black world "is mired in institutional bad faith because white people anointed themselves the power to fundamentally exclude Black people as humans, demand justification for their existence, and exercise their right to subjugate them" (p. 3). These narratives shape the boundaries of human life, as sets the parameters for human possibilities and impossibilities. While human suffering can be defined and understood, the Black experiences a grammar of suffering – distinct from that of the human, unique to the slave.

Grammar of Suffering

What does it mean to suffer? Can suffering and pain be measured and if so, by what metric? If the Black body is not human, if it does not experience pain in the same way, whether physically, mentally, emotionally, or ontologically, as humans, can it experience suffering? And is it heard or understood by humans? Wilderson (2010) described "the grammar of suffering" as a language of one that is in pain yet does not have a comparable context for relaying the amount of grief, suffering, or agony in a sensible way for human understanding. Further, Wilderson (2010) described, it is

> *the only ethical grammar available to modern politics and modernity writ large, for it draws our attention not to how space and time are used and abused by enfranchised and violently powerful interests, but to the violence that underwrites the modern world's capacity to think, act, and exist spatially and temporally*. (p. 2)

Black people are not the only group to suffer. Wilderson (2010) argued that while non-Black people experience suffering, it is based in "social turmoil through the rubric of conflict" – revealing that when problems arise, there are possibilities for resolution. However, the Black's grammar of suffering does not align with a rubric of conflict, but instead with a rubric of antagonism: it is "an irreconcilable struggle between entities, or positions, the resolution of which is not dialectical but entails the obliteration of one of the positions" (Wilderson, 2010, p. 5). The suffering of non-Black people can be resolved, whereas the grammar of suffering for the Black only can end through annihilation. The mere existence of the Black is antagonistic. To be Black is to be in constant entanglement with a grammar of suffering. To be Black is to be under a constant *regime of violence,* as Wilderson (2020) calls it.

Media: An Institution of Anti-Black Surveillance and Violence

> *Insofar as the American public creates a monster, they are not about to recognize it. You create a monster and destroy it. It is part of the American way of life, if you like.*
> James Baldwin (Elgrably, 1984)

The word "media" is defined as the variety of methods of communication used in a society. Media can be "news, music, movies, education,

promotional messages and other data" (Market Business News, 2023). Other prominent mediums are printed/digitized legislation, books, podcasts, television shows and commercials, and more. They document and circulate information that is regarded by individuals, organizations/groups, businesses/programs, and institutions as popular, integral, or necessary for several agendas, goals, and intentions through archives, radio and television broadcast, print, or the internet. Media is where many of us learn about groups outside of our community. As a public sphere, media consistently, intentionally, and strategically influences our worldviews to every aspect of daily life. Mass media should be recognized as an institution, as it structures and facilitates rules, expectations, and norms that dictate both individual and collective behavior.

Like other institutions, the ideology of media is to engage and influence members of society through bad faith narratives, which are often centered on constructs like race. Stuart Hall (2021) described its power:

> *The media construct for us a definition of what race is, what meaning the imagery of race carries, and what the 'problem of race' is understood to be. They help to classify out the world in terms of the categories of race. The media are not only a powerful source of ideas about race. They are also one place where these ideas are articulated, worked on, transformed, and elaborated*. (p.184)

As mass media acts as a space for sharing ideas and meaning making, it forms and elaborates ideological views about what is acceptable (or not) within dominant culture. As a result, it has been used to be divisive in many ways because of the methods of discourse. Dumas (2010) defined discourse as "use of language to construct certain knowledge as legitimate, while delegitimizing other knowledges" (p. 405). Media regularly engages in bad faith discourse about the Black, which influence the surveillance and spectacular violence that they experience.

Media has historically acted as a form of surveillance, as it authorizes and tracks the surveilling of the Black. It is during slavery that surveillance becomes an agenda for both the nation-state and public media. Hill (2020) described the evolution of anti-Black surveillance, as supported by law and policy:

> *Since Black people were brought to the Americas, we have been the subjects of state-sponsored and state-sanctioned surveillance. From slavery-era flesh branding to COINTEL-PRO-era phone tapping, various technologies have been used to monitor, control, discipline, and punish Black folk. Since 9/11, these forms of surveillance have not only continued but have been codified into law under the guise of economic efficiency, public safety, and national security*. (p. 51)

Surveillance media has shapeshifted across time and space, including printed and disseminated public legislation. Some of the earliest forms of surveillance by legislation were slave laws and Black codes (Browne, 2015). Decided in courts, offices, and homes alike, these laws and codes were written or printed, signed, and disseminated to larger society. Punishment for various forms of anti-Black legislation during slavery could range from cruel beatings, to being sold, and even death. Media then becomes not only an institution of surveillance, but also a site for recruiting and displaying spectacular violence against the Black.

The regime of violence (Wilderson, 2020) is enacted on an institutional level through quotidian, mundane activity, such as approving anti-Black legislation. This regime is also carried out through spectacular violence. The spectacle becomes a method of desensitizing and standardizing a society to a culture of violence against the Black. Hill (2020) described,

> *I use the term spectacle to draw attention to the role of visuality and how we come to understand incidents of violence. Our individual and collective response to these incidents is directly connected to our ability to see, and in many cases hear, what has transpired. The spectacle violence is also about the public nature of these events. When a state inflicts violence in full public view,*

> *the impact reaches beyond just the person who suffers the violence*. (p. 61)

While this spectacle can happen in plain view of a live audience, it can also be shared beyond that moment through forms of media, such as lynching post cards or body cam executions. The media thrives on public service announcements (and murders) of the Black. While Black people are not the only group that suffers, the Black is the only group who is consistently engaged through spectacular displays of violence within public media. This grammar of suffering is communicated to maintain and subjugate the Black to the lowest realms of society. In the show *Black Mirror*, there is an episode called Black Museum about a museum which held artifacts and archives of suffering, one of which was a Black man's soul trapped in a hologram which could be tortured and enjoyed by visiting costumers for all eternity (Brooker, 2017). The media not only often captures the violence and deaths of the Black, but it also makes it accessible to watch and consume again and again. It is through the media where anti-Black racism and bad faith intersect.

Bearing Witness to Media: Archives of Suffering

> *Every time that Black people are forced to witness systematic violence against people who look like us, and those who we love, we are taught about our lack of value within this country. We are sent a message that unmerited suffering is an inevitable part of Black life. We are reminded of the precarity of our own lives. This does profound damage to our spirits, our psyches, our culture, and our politics.*
> Hill, 2020, p. 60

Archives are forms of media that provide accounts of the past, often for bodies no longer tangible to us, for voices no longer heard to us, for stories whose owners are not here to share. Hartman (2021) described the archive: it "dictates what can be said about the past and the kinds of stories that can be told about persons cataloged, embalmed, and sealed away in box files and folios" (p. 17). Archives act as a medium for connecting to histories that we may never know and to people we will never meet. Schools and universities, museums, libraries, the internet, and other spaces of media today hold archives rooted in bad faith about the Black across time and space. This archives not only aim to deceive, but often work to silence.

As Black people were considered property during slavery, many of their identities and stories are forever lost to us today as the archives often do not reveal birth certificates of the Black, but rather inventories of the Black. Hartman (2017) argued, "To read the archive is to enter a mortuary; it permits one final viewing and allows for a last glimpse of persons about to disappear into the slave hold" (p. 17). We can trace where and when the African peoples arrived on American soil through forms of media. We may not know their names, where they were stolen from, their languages, literacies, and ways of existing in the world – but we do know that their bodies were brought here and valued as property through media.

Through the production and dissemination of archives, a narrator holds power in what becomes fact and history; in which case, all others become fiction, or even nonexistent. Silencing, as Trouillot (2015) calls it, is "due to uneven power in the production of sources, archives, and narratives" (p. 27). Both the historical archive and modern media work in bad faith to exclude and eradicate. It is through various forms of archives and modern media where sanctions, technologies, and methods of anti-Black surveillance, violence and death are found. Dumas (2016) described,

> *There is no clear historical moment in which there was a break between slavery and acknowledgement of Black citizenship and Human-ness; nor is there any indication of a clear disruption of the technologies of violence – that is, the institutional structures and social processes – that maintain Black*

> *subjugation. … One must consider the Black as (still) incapable of asking for (civil or human) rights.* (p. 14-15)

A look at media across time and space reveals that there has been no break in these sanctions and methods. The medias of the world, then and now, have ranged from nineteenth century lynching post cards to contemporary spectacular forms of violence on Black people across endless news channels. Hartman et al. (2022) described, "the relation between slavery and the present [is] open, unfinished" (p. xxix). There has been no disruption, no commercial break from bad faith narratives of the Black. These narratives of the nation have long spewed dangerous framings of inhumanity, ignorance, poverty, and criminality as it relates to the Black. Through digging through various archives of suffering, I provide a chronology of different forms of media created in bad faith and disseminated as grammars of violence against the Black across three broad periods: enslavement, post-emancipation, and the contemporary.

Plantation Media and the Enslaved

While many of us may think of media as solely accessible via our phones, TVs, and computers, mass media has long been in existence prior to invention of the vast spaces of radio, television, and internet. Some of the earliest forms of media that engaged Black bodies on US soil were the invoices, sale listings, bills of sale, lost-and-found advertisements and warrants and legislation on their mobility, organizing, and language use (Browne, 2015; Hartman, 2007; Hartman, 2022; Savali, 2015). These documents would provide physical descriptions, types of skills they held and labor they conducted, and temperaments of the Black. As Black people were not recognized as human, but instead property, their physical bodies were *owned, sold, traded* like cattle through domination by enslavers. A major tool that enslavers used to strip Black people of their humanity was to stifle their language and literacy use. It was illegal for the Black to learn how to read and write across many colonies. As a result, many enslaved Africans were not able to read the forms of media in the homes of their enslavers or on the streets of their towns, even when this media was focused on their bodies.
Plantation media was used to control, subjugate, locate, and maintain Black bodies on the plantation and to retrieve those that escape. For example, runaway slave advertisements were commonly posted and circulated to surveil, capture, and re-claim runaways. Harriet Jacobs (2001), an enslaved woman, recalled a posted advertisement for the capture of her friend, which read:

> *$300 REWARD! Ran away from the subscriber, an intelligent, bright, mulatto girl, named Linda, 21 years of age. Five feet four inches high. Dark eyes, and black hair inclined to curl; but it can be made straight. Has a decayed spot on a front tooth. She can read and write, and in all probability will try to get to the Free States. All persons are forbidden, under penalty of the law, to harbor or employ said slave. $150 will be given to whoever takes her in the state, and $300 if taken out of the state and delivered to me, or lodged in jail.* (p. 82-83)

Media such as this advertisement often described the Black in ways that resemble objects rather than people. These notices described their bodies similar to the likeness of a doll or a car – tangible, physical descriptors, including its ability to function properly and produce labor.

Black bodies moved throughout the country not by their own accord, but through sales transactions. The Black was purchased and consumed like store goods. Receipts and bills of sale were forms of media sanctioned the movement of the Black, like furniture. Years after escaping her enslavers while still hiding out in a family member's attic, Harriet Jacobs learned of her "freedom," effective through a sales transaction. Jacobs (2001) fumed:

> *My brain reeled as I read these lines. A gentleman near me said, 'It's true; I have seen the bill of sale.' 'The bill of sale!' Those*

> *words struck me like a blow. So I was sold at last! A human being sold in the free city of New York! The bill of sale is on record, and future generations will learn from it that women were articles of traffic in New York. I well know the value of that bit of paper; but much as I love freedom, I do not like to look upon it.* (p. 163)

A paper document, suspectable to any and every kind of element such as water and fire, had more authority than the will, the thoughts, and the bones of a Black person. These runaway advertisements and bills of sale, as well as the slave patrol, regulated the mobility, communication, and organizing of the Black. Through the agenda of bad faith media, the Black was on constant surveillance and open to perpetual violence from the colonial era through post-emancipation. In the afterlife of slavery, media continues to aid in anti-Black violence with its wide range of archives of suffering.

Jim Crow Media and the Negro

Following the Civil War, Black people were emancipated from chattel slavery; however, they were not welcomed into society. The white majority were adamant about not wanting to integrate or engage with Black people. Legislation supported their disdain, as "separate but equal" became the norm across all public society, relegating Black people to create, find, and maintain their own spaces of education, employment, leisure, medicine, and more. The law did not recognize or mobilize the humanity of Black people. In fact, many of the various slave laws and policies which made it legal to surveil and sanction the violence and death of Black people and communities were later extended into post-emancipation.

One of the major forms of anti-Black violence during this era was narratives of Black savagery, inferiority, and docility. During this time period, various forms of media released with this bad faith agenda, including films, shows, and books. A shift from wild slave to a "comedic" turn begins to socialize all that is Black as ignorant, foolish, and imprudent. Smiley and Fakunle (2016) explained, "these depictions of Blackness as docile and manageable reflected the ability to control the Black body and mind, creating the idea that slavery was the best position for Black people" (p. 352). An example is the silent film *Birth of a Nation* (1915), which used Blackface to depict Black people in the most racist, absurd ways. Minstrel shows were another form of bad faith media during this era, which were theater shows performed by white actors in Black face "to portray Black people in stereotypes" (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016, p. 352). The book *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) also fed propaganda to larger society about enslaved people as "content with their place in society" during the antebellum era (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016, p. 352).

While these forms of media did not directly cause physical violence to Black people, the bad faith narratives of anti-Black sentiment within the media sanctioned the emotional and spiritual violence that they experienced. The visuality of minstrel shows and other forms of media that centers the Black as other than human is violent in nature. This bad faith media aided in not only perpetuating how the Black was viewed, but also sanctioned the violence in which they were interacted with.

The agenda of anti-Black media is not limited to surveillance and emotional/spiritual violence but is also carried out through spectacular physical violence and death. While Black people were being lynched during chattel slavery, these public, community events continued largely into Jim Crow era. Lynching is an act of spectacular violence yet was treated by white people as a curated show and social event. Kimberly Juanita Brown described the intentionality of this event:

> *People came on dates. They brought picnic baskets. They brought their kids. This is not something that is supposed to horrify – it's supposed to entertain. The photographer is a professional photographer. Hired. Gives post*

> *cards to people to send to their family members.* (Dartmouth College, 2021)

Public lynchings were carried out through elaborate and extensive efforts, such as orchestrating of the spectacle and audience, including professional photographers who were hired to capture and disseminate the moment for further consumption. A major form of media that circulated amongst the white community during this time was lynching post cards. Further, Hill (2020) detailed:

> *White southerners ate lunch and drank whiskey as Black bodies dangled from trees in front of them. The severed fingers, toes, and genitalia of murdered Blacks were taken as physical keepsakes of the festivities. Postcards with images of the lynchings were* routinely sent through the mail. (p. 62)

Black people, although "emancipated," could be strung up and murdered in broad daylight, while whites danced around their bodies and consumed their suffering in real time and in replay.

These spectacular forms of violence and death were not only a display for those present, but the post cards allowed those far beyond to also enjoy the power which they hold over Black bodies. Hartman et al. (2022) described the significance of the spectacle:

> *The exercise of power is inseparable from its display. Domination depended on demonstrations of the slaveholder's dominion and the captive's abasement. Representing power was essential to wielding it. … Such performances made the captive body the vehicle of the master's power and truth. What was demanded by the master was simulated by the enslaved.* (p. 9)

Having power was not enough; one also must display it. While media did not start the surveillance, violence, and death of Black people, it certainly acted as a powerful force of disseminating bad faith across time and space to maintain the violence.

Finally, this era also introduced society not only to technologies of photographs, but also to video. While the Jim Crow era did not begin with televisions in the homes across the nation, the era did end with the new technology that would connect homes across suburbia and urban cities which were often very divided in daily life. Prior to the television, many Black people did not have access to the spaces, beliefs, and practices of suburban communities that whites lived their American dream in. This changed when the television joined the homes of Black and white people. hooks (2006) elaborated,

> *White supremacist values were projected into our living rooms, into the most intimate spaces of our lives by mass media. …Even though most black communities were and remain segregated, mass media bring white supremacy into our lives, constantly reminding us of our marginalized status. With the television on, whites were and are always with us, their voices, values, and beliefs echoing in our brains.* (p. 110)

The impact the TV made in seeing beyond your own community was massive.

As Black people fought for civil rights and desegregation, mass media was central to the project of anti-Black, bad faith narratives. Peaceful sit-ins, marches, and protests were often covered by news reporters that showed these gatherings taking a turn for the worse – typically, after police or average white citizens arrive and engage/attack the Black public. The media following these Black organizing spaces largely displayed Black people as irrational and erratic.

hooks (2006) explained, "many white folks who never [had] intimate contact with black folks now feel that they know what we are like because television has brought us into their homes" (p. 11). This meant that the deficit framing of Black people was extremely powerful, being that it may have been the first visual impression or interaction that white masses might have gained of them and vice versa. With picture and video technologies now an integral part of society,

these bad faith narratives have been used to frame peaceful protestors as vicious looters and rioters, worthy to be disrupted by protectors of law. The media distorts the work of Black movements, such as Civil Rights and Black Lives Matter, as well as surveils the movements and its followers. The grammar of violence has not been emancipated, but instead has shape-shifted endlessly as time continues to reveal the temporality and power of media.

Contemporary Media and the Black "Citizen"

Today, media is integrated into our lives more than ever, as most people in society own a phone or device with access to the internet, podcasts, music, audio books, and more. The biases, beliefs, and messages that media shares regularly influence our schemas. Similar to every other major institution in U.S. society, mass media is largely run by a white majority. Savali (2015) detailed, "television newsrooms are nearly 80 percent white …while radio newsrooms are 92 percent white. …The percentage of minority journalists has remained between 12 and 14 percent for more than a decade" (para. 8). These numbers are frightening in comparison to its relative audience, as "96% of African American Internet users aged 18-29 use a social network of some kind" (Day, 2015, para. 20). Because of the various types of media and the vast reach of social media, we are regularly influenced by the bad faith narratives it spews.

In contemporary times, we see an afterlife of minstrel shows, as they continue to shape modern entertainment, such as Black tv shows and movies, as well as shows and movies about the Black but made by whites. Through the programming of bad faith media, Hall (2021) argued that "the often complex and subtle ways in which the ideologies of racism are sustained in our culture" have become "common sense" for how society should function (p. 177). In the afterlife of minstrel shows, we find that the Black is still the butt of the joke, as Black entertainment continues to be shaped by mockery and caricature. Engaged as a clown or joker, the Black is failed to be engaged as a human with innate needs but rather a cartoonish, consumable property. Baker-Bell et al. (2017b) described the power of anti-Black media:

> *Constructing images that promote racial inferiority contributes to a lack of empathy for Black life. Because of this lack of empathy, society becomes desensitized to Black suffering and Black humanity. Desensitization of brutal violence and death of Black people, such as seeing video clips on social media of those who were murdered in real-time become part of the normal order of business.* (p. 136)

This subjects the Black to various and extreme forms of violence as they are seen as lacking humanity and void of suffering, except for entertainment purposes to whites.

The Black is shown as dangerous, ignorant, uncultured, incapable of logic or reason; only through violence can it be engaged. Violence and death of the Black becomes Black responsibility. For example, Fox News, which is viewed as "the most trusted cable news network," consistently spreads bad faith narratives, which justify anti-Black surveillance, violence, and death, thus shifting responsibility from the state and its agents to the Black community (Mills, 2017, p. 40). Further, Mills (2017) argued, media spaces such as Fox News aim to "distract from issues of police violence by arguing that the black community is to blame for any police violence because the police are forced to enter black communities" (p. 48). Through the media, the Black becomes synonymous with *the criminal*, thus media orders and sanctions anti-Black sentiment through policing and "good Samaritan" efforts of non-Blacks.

The history of public policing in this nation began in the antebellum era with slave patrols. Enslavers were often met with resistance in capturing, kidnapping, relocating, and enslaving Africans, so in addition to the slave patrol being created, some of the earliest colonial acts gave *any* person the right to apprehend any slave off

the plantation without a pass (Wilderson, 2010). The Fugitive Slave Act, which was passed on a federal level, legally sanctioned not only the slave patrol, but any and all white persons the right to capture and return slaves back to their owners. The police force today largely understands their work through the origin of slave patrol labor, which was rooted in anti-Black surveillance and control via forms of media (Browne, 2015).

Similar to media and slave patrols, bad faith media continues to support contemporary police within corralling and controlling Black people today. Police regularly use brute force to engage Black people, and that force is seen public view for live consumption or replayed through the media, resembling the spectacle of lynching. Hill (2020) described:

> *Every day, we are bombarded by the spectacle of violence. Television, film, music, billboards, video games, social media, and traditional media all confront us with extraordinary levels of violence. This violence takes many forms, but anti-Black violence is near the top of the list. From Eric Garner to Ahmaud Aubrey to George Floyd, we are constantly forced to witness the brutal killings of Black people, both by the state and citizens.* (p. 57)

Mass media has provided a platform for white supremacy to thrive and expand, as an unprecedented amount of hate groups and dark web sites have skyrocketed in the contemporary. Media can be created by anyone and shared through endless methods. Inherently, media, and the spectacle, would forever change the terms of civil society. Sojoyner (2023) described further:

> *(1) video evidence would always be needed to prove claims that Black people have known and experienced to be true and*
> *(2) (2) the constant rendering of the spectacle ([i.e.] the violent attack on Rodney King) over and over again across news outlets and media platforms would numb the collective psyche. Thus the spectacle would grow to become begrudgingly (or in some quarters very willingly) accepted as a part of normative society.* (p. 88)

It is through the media, and the spectacle, that we come to terms with who is considered human v. non-human, citizen v. non-citizen, Black v. non-Black. With the deep and widespread reach of media across the nation and world, bad faith is being disseminated en masse and without restraint, reaching across space, time, race, and age.

As bad faith media is ingrained in every aspect of modern civil society, it also works to influence schools, and inherently, our students. Trouillot (2015) explained,

> *Most Europeans and North Americans learn their first history lessons through media that have not been subjected to the standards set by peer reviews, university presses, or doctoral committees. Long before average citizens read the historians who set the standards of the day for colleagues and students, they access history through celebrations, site and museum visits, movies, national holidays, and primary school books*. (p. 20)

However, even media that has been peer-reviewed can be dangerous. Schools, as Dumas (2013) argued, are sites of Black suffering, and forms of media within educational spaces aid in that suffering, silencing, and other forms of violence. This suffering happens by the media used, but those who are teaching the students. The majority of K-12 educators are white and the curricula that are taught and the practices that are used to teach are largely Eurocentric, which leave students of all other backgrounds excluded and silenced (Love, 2019). In addition to not learning about this own people, history, and ways of knowing, Black students are supplied with bad faith narratives that standardize whiteness. Black people historically been excluded from societal spaces such as schools, and continue to finds themselves to be unwelcome. Some argue that schooling and Black success are antithetical, as schooling spaces were largely built by the Black

but not with the Black in mind. Dancy and Wright (2023) argued,

> *The idea of universality is antagonistic to Black and Blackness. The word 'universe' as a core construct of the word 'university' embeds this relationship; thus, the modern university as formed within and for antiblackness is ripe for critical engagement*. (p. 8)

Black people have unfettered access to grammars of suffering and violence both beyond school walls and within. Consistent, overt, and covert exposure to Black suffering, surveillance, violence, and death does irreparable damage to the minds and spirits of Black students. Baker-Bell et al. (2017b) argued, "the same racist brutality toward Black citizens that we see happening on the streets across the United States mirrors the violence toward Black students that is happening in our nation's *academic* streets" (p. 131). Federal and state standards, textbooks and scripted curricula have typically centered white supremacist values; however, these are not the only forms of media that our students have access to. McArthur (2021) explained,

> *students are already bringing media into schools with them. They come in listening to media and watching media on their phones. They are reading comics and novels and discussing video games. Because youth are being socialized and conditioned through their engagement with media, what teachers choose to do with media pedagogically becomes significant*. (p. 48)

Media is illusive and powerful in its grip and agenda. Rooted in anti-Blackness and bad faith, media shapes schools and society alike, along with its collective members.

Conclusion

This is the press, an irresponsible press. It will make the criminal look like he's the victim and make the victim look like he's the criminal. If you aren't careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed and loving the people who are doing the oppressing.
Malcolm X, 1964 (Savali, 2015, para. 2)

Media, a tool of everyday life in modern society, finds its roots in anti-Blackness and bad faith. Throughout history, the various mediums of mass consumption have been a long-standing project to void humanity of the Black. Baker-Bell et. al. (2017a) described the vastness of the public, anti-Black archive, "We sit with the heavy hauntings of Black and Brown death: photographs, videos, social media hashtags, well-known and underreported news stories" (p. 116). Our society is inundated with Black suffering, those that are known and those which we will never know. Despite the depth of mass media and its archive, there is so much about the suffering of the Black which was never recorded or shared. hooks (2006) described painfully, "despite all the documented cases of shootings, lynchings, and various slaughters of black folks by hostile white racists we will never really know the exact numbers [of Black death]" (p. 22). It is within media that our society overwhelms us with the terror of the Black, but silences their identities, lives, dreams, and futures. It is through bad faith that the society is introduced and taught how to exist, in spite of the Black.

Because of its vast reach, the media and its disseminators have the power to shape entire worlds. It should be expected then that the media, responsible of curating and disseminating information, is based in integrity as the perception is that the resource is one of fact. Such facts, in theory, should thus guarantee the safety and prosperity of its nation and all members. Whether a broadcasting of election voting, a billboard of disease tracking, or crime reporting, these narratives breathe life, or death, into the homes and realities of the audiences watching and listening. Color of Change (2015) described:

> *Even in our rapidly changing media environment, television news remains an essential public resource. It is a trusted service that people rely on for making decisions about everything from what*

> *laws should be passed, to what neighborhoods to live in. TV news influences our thoughts and feelings not only about critical issues, but also about one another. We place enormous trust in news outlets, and the basis of the trust is accuracy.* (p. 3)

While major news channels, such as Fox, and other major forms of media should be expected to share only accurate information with the public, a look at the history of media reveals that the media was not used for accuracy; it was used for control. Since the eighteenth century, Black people have faced media injustice, "which leads to both the erasure and criminalization" of their community (Savali, 2015, para. 1). As media has shapeshifted, this agenda has only been exacerbated. The media controls not only how Black people are viewed by larger society, but also how they are engaged (or not). As a result, bad faith finds itself at the heart of media production, and into our most intimate spaces – our homes, our social communities, our minds.

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Domestic Violence, Undomesticated Voice: Bad Faith Hermeneutics and Sacred Pedagogy in Queer Women of Color Life Writing

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As a subset of nonfiction, life writings are expected to be grounded in reality. Feminist and decolonial autobiography scholars, however, have been at pains to point out the subjective and cultural nature of 'reality.' The perception of what is real or what could conceivably *be* real depends on the limited horizons of dominant epistemic infrastructures, which means that the experiences of non-normative subjects are likely to be dismissed as unreal (Stremlau, 2007; Gilmore, 2017; Aubry, 2007). Moreover, the Western understanding of reality as it is applied to life writing relies on a hermeneutic of individualism that many non-Western cultures reject (Sands, 1998). Women of color life writings push against an individualist and Western empiricist understanding of selfhood by pursuing forms of knowing the self that prioritize the reality of intersubjectivity in both its beauty and messiness. As Gloria Anzaldua's groundbreaking collection *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981) showed, giving weight to the foundational nature of community to self-knowledge does not negate the idiosyncrasy or potential for dissent so invaluable to the political work of personal voice but rather refuses the bad faith Western conscription of individuality as truest when it is free from Others.

Feminist life writing scholar Leigh Gilmore has traced how the post-1980s memoir boom within the U.S. publishing industry coincided with the global consolidation of neoliberalism. She reads the neoliberal embrace of memoir as representative of the Western world's hypnosis by cruel optimism and its enforcement of bad faith disavowals of imperial state violence (Gilmore, 2017).[12] She points to global reactions to K'iche' Guatemalan activist Rigoberta Menchú's personal, book-length testimony to the genocidal violence perpetrated against indigenous Guatemalans during the Guatemalan Civil War. When Menchú first published her testimony, *I, Rigoberta Menchú* in 1983, it was widely applauded as a brave and important work of activism; she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 (Gilmore, 2017, p. 63). However, in 1999, white American anthropologist David Stoll published a book-length fact-check of Menchú's testimony, titled *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans* (Gilmore, 2017, p. 63). Stoll's bad faith criticism of Menchú's testimony focused on minor details, such as whether she was actually present at the scene of her brother's murder and her level of education, rather than the larger fact of mass violence against indigenous Guatemalans to which she was most directly testifying (Rohter, 1998). Gilmore reads Stoll's attack on Menchú and the global scandal that followed--- many Western critics demanded Menchú's Nobel be revoked--as evidencing how the reality culture that pervades autobiography studies serves less as an agent of truth than as a way of discounting truths that are inconvenient to dominant consumer publics.

Building on Gilmore, my work focuses on how life writing, and specifically the tension between a *life*, an internal and inchoate phenomenal experience, and *writing,* an externalized form of communication at least somewhat dependent on clarity and form,

[12] Lauren Berlant developed the concept of cruel optimism to describe how subjects under neoliberalism remain invested in state structures of slow violence and debilitation through a combination of the sunken cost fallacy and a form of magical thinking supported by a stream of feel-good narratives circulated within the public sphere whose optimism is at odds with the day-to-day experience of most contemporary Western subjects.

provides a productively messy site for navigating both the internalization of imperial state epistemologies and the subversive epistemological force of decolonial pedagogies of selfhood. Moreover, I choose to focus on testimonies of domestic abuse specifically for how public testimonies to domestic abuse by definition trouble the private-public binary intrinsic to Western individualism as well as its harmful demarcation of the nuclear family as the primary form of community.

The two life writings I turn to as case studies, Carmen Maria Machado's 2019 memoir *In the Dream House* and Alexis Pauline Gumbs' 2016 poetry collection *Spill: Scenes of Black Feminist Fugitivity*, are both testimonies to domestic abuse that center explicitly on the narrator's simultaneous domestication by the discursive limits of the self-as-text and the epistemic infrastructures of national and cultural communities. In her monograph on building decolonial, transnational feminist pedagogies, *Pedagogies of Crossing*, M. Jacqui Alexander argues that the secularization of modern feminism has led to a disinvestment in spiritual epistemologies that enforces a static understanding of the self-evident in the second-wave formulation of the personal as political that, for women or color, often amounts to the academic use of their life experience as evidence of state violence. She proposes instead the "personal as spiritual," (Alexander, 2016, p. 296) which accounts for how spirituality

> *inheres the lived capacity to initiate and sustain communication between spiritual forces and human consciousness, to align the inner self, the behavioral self and the invisible, we are confronting an engagement with the embodied power of the Sacred, collectivized self-possession, if you will […]* for even the most egregious signatures of new empire are not the sole organizing nexus of subjectivity" (Alexander, 2016, p. 328).

Alexander's pedagogy of the Sacred complicates the dominant narrative of the West as a purely individualistic culture and everything outside the West as purely collectivist. The West is permissive of domesticated forms of individuality that fit into the state puzzles of racial capitalism and imperialism, but non-Western, spiritual understandings of the self allow for intersubjective frameworks of identity-formation reflective of individual existence as animated but not determined by community belonging. My readings of *In the Dream House* and *Spill* will focus on how Machado and Gumbs use Sacred narrative strategies to work against the memoir form's susceptibility to a bad faith hermeneutic of transparent individualism. Their testimonies figure the self as neither an individual free from community nor a mere victim of state violence but rather a creative spirit animated equally by communal histories and the idiosyncrasy of new life and perspective.

Queering Testimony in *In the Dream House*

In the Dream House opens with a critique of the archive. Machado cites Saidiya Hartman's groundbreaking essay, "Venus in Two Acts," which considers the silences implicit to archives of slavery, to set up her exploration of archives as forces of invisibilization. She focuses specifically on how archives of domestic abuse have invisibilized queer people and other marginalized subjects whose experiences do not fit the character tropes of a physically intimidating husband and a fragile, cowering wife. She asserts that, "as we consider the forms intimate violence takes today, each new concept--- the male victim, the female perpetrator, queer abusers, and the queer abused-- reveals itself as another ghost that has always been here, haunting the ruler's house" (Machado, 2019, p. 5). One of the main conundrums haunting *Dream House* in turn becomes how a ghost makes itself visible to a culture whose denial of its specters is foundational to its power.

The differential allocation of reality, in which some subjects are more 'real' than others under Western law, structures Machado's

relationship with her abuser. Machado's abuser is a skinny, blonde, able-bodied, white woman who comes from a monied, if emotionally dysfunctional, family. She and Machado met in their early twenties, when they were both applying to graduate school. At the time, Machado had little experience in relationships and was recovering from a hyper-Christian childhood in which she was seduced and emotionally exploited by a youth pastor who was eventually expelled from the church for sexual abuse. Machado was thus used to being a specter within a rigidly authoritative social setting and finding refuge in narcissistic and powerful community members. In her book, *Conflict is Not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility, and the Duty of Repair* queer theorist Sarah Schulman traces the consequences of the contemporary cultural vocabulary surrounding abuse. She grounds her study, which builds on her experience in grassroots domestic violence and queer support organizations, in the continued escalation of police violence against Black people. She points to how, in the state murder of Eric Garner, in which Garner repeatedly told the officer strangling him that he couldn't breathe, "policemen looked at *nothing*, the complete absence of threat, and there they saw threat gross enough to justify murder. Nothing happened, but these people with power saw *abuse*" (Schulman, 2016, p. 16). Garner's state of utter abjection served as a blank slate for the police's paranoid projections of unruly Otherness against which they are trained to see themselves at war.

Schulman traces the distorted perception of threat and underreaction to state violence within U.S. public culture to "a culture of underreaction to abuse and overreaction to conflict" (Schulman, 2016, p. 21). Her case studies of domestic terror throughout *Conflict is Not Abuse* revolve around how the proliferation of the term 'abuse' has worsened the conflation of any form of tension within interpersonal relationships with abuse worthy of state intervention. The upshot of the overgeneralization of abuse, Schulman finds, has not been strengthened infrastructures of care for vulnerable groups but the consolidation of state infrastructures of policing and punishment and their overuse by people with social power. Schulman describes how, in her experience working with grassroots domestic violence organizations, "perpetrators increasingly are the ones to call the police, threaten legal action, send lawyer letters, or threaten or seek restraining orders as part and parcel of their agenda of blame and unilateral control" (2016, p.74). The likelihood of the police believing the partner who has the greatest alignment with dominant markers of respectability--- white, wealthy, straight, cis, male, athletic--- not only confirms the abuser's distorted worldview but also worsens the victim's structural vulnerability by placing them at the mercy of the state.

Schulman notes how the mutually reinforcing nature of an abuser's worldview entangling with the worldview of the state is particularly evident in police intervention within queer relationships. She cites how a 2014 National Coalition of Anti-Violence programs' report on LGBTQI Intimate Partner Abuse found that, "the police mis-arrested the survivor as the perpetrator of violence' in *over half* of all queer domestic abuse arrests" (2016, p. 75, emphasis mine). Though Machado's abuser never called the police on her, the overgeneralization of abuse claims and the consolidation of state mechanisms of power are evident in Machado's difficulty truly knowing herself as a victim and in her ex's continued insistence that Machado is the partner deserving of blame.

The unusual memoir structure of *Dream House* emblematizes Machado's lifelong experience growing and learning within institutional structures of silencing. Western readers may expect memoirists to be as transparent as possible within their writing, but how can you be transparent when you've spent your whole life being told your own experiences are inaccurate, leaving all your memories shrouded in doubt, and, more to the point, *why* would you be transparent when honesty has always led to punishment? Machado's adolescent

relationship with her youth pastor, Joel develops because he, unlike her conservative parents and the rest of her conservative church, gives her a space to speak the truths of her life. Joel "gave smart, politically progressive sermons that sowed indignation among the older congregants, which delighted [Machado] to no end" (Machado, 2019, p. 30). He would close the door to his office so they could

> *[talk] about God and ethics and history and school; his marriage; the sexual assault in my freshman year that I couldn't excise from my brain. He gave me permission to swear in front of him, which I did, profusely […] Once, I sat down on the floor, and he joined me there, our knees touching. 'Sometimes you just need a change of perspective,' he told me* (Machado, 2019, p. 32).

Joel's openness ends up being another example of the person with power in a relationship over-valuing their needs and disregarding the consequences of enacting those needs through a vulnerable partner. When Joel is revealed to be a sexual abuser and has to leave the state, cutting Machado out of his life, she is devastated and also deeply confused. He initially seemed to offer her the avenue to a more open world but turned out to be complicit in the banal, everyday reality of male entitlement. The revelation that Joel is an abuser makes it equally possible that the rest of what she learned throughout their relationship--- that it was okay to critique the church, to talk openly about sexual violence, to curse--- were just more tantalizing lies.

Layered onto Machado's childhood of religious suppression and her adolescent relationship with Joel is the fact of her queerness, whose forced denial in a conversative town worsens her learned insecurities about the accuracy of her own desires and impulses. During her sophomore year of high school, she grew close to another bookish girl in her class without realizing her feelings were imbued with sexual desire. Looking back, she describes how, "I didn't know any queers. I did not understand myself. I didn't know what it meant to want to kiss another woman. Years later, I'd figure that part out. But then, I didn't know what it meant to be afraid of another woman. Do you see now? Do you understand?" (Machado, 2019, p. 139). Machado's inquiries to her reader, "Do you see now? Do you understand?" (Machado, 2019, p. 139) are asking if they understand why she took so long to recognize her relationship with her partner as abusive, when her whole life as a queer woman has been threaded with misrecognitions and forbidden intimacies. Part of not knowing "what it meant to kiss another woman" or "what it meant to be afraid of another woman" (Machado, 2019, p. 139) is just the nature of a first experience, but it was also undeniably worsened by the epistemic infrastructures of a conservative family, church, and nation-state that forbid the disclosure and recognition of queer relationalities.

After Machado finally ends her relationship, she reflects on the fundamental ways in which the experience of being abused has changed her, such as the "sixth sense" she develops when "meeting a new classmate or coworker, a friend's new girlfriend, a stranger at a party" that tells her when someone is capable of abuse through an intense wave a physical revulsion, "akin to the sour liquid rush of saliva that precedes vomiting" (Machado, 2019, p. 238). She goes on to cite José Esteban Muñoz's formulation of ephemera as queer evidence. With an air of satire, she combines Muñoz's suggested turn to ephemera with the scientific language of legal evidence forms:

> The ephemera: The recorded sound waves of her speech on one axis and a precise measurement of the flood of adrenaline and cortisol in my body on the other. Witness statements from the strangers who anxiously looked at us sideways in public places. A photograph of her grip on my arm in Florida, with measurements of the shadows to indicate depth of indentation; an equation to

> represent the likely pressure. A wire looped through my hair, ready to record her hiss. The rancid smell of anger. The metal tang of fear in the back of my throat.
>
> None of these things exist. You have no reason to believe me (Machado, 2019, p. 225).

Machado's sardonic perspective on queer ephemera comes from her own experience of the public reluctance to believe victims of abuse, *especially* when the victim lacks empirically verifiable forms of evidence. Her experiences being doubted compound her lifelong difficulties believing her own intuitions, illustrating the ways in which the cultural reliance on empiricism and a dismissal of affect and imagination can in fact further solidify sociopolitical and material inequities by reinforcing the hegemony of what is already known and who is already believed. When she tries to tell people about how her abuser treated her,

> some people listen. Others politely nod while slowly closing the door behind their eyes; you might as well be a proselytizing Jehovah's Witness or an encyclopedia peddler. Kind to you in person, what they say to others makes its way back to you: *We don't know for certain that it's as bad as she says. The woman from the Dream House seems perfectly fine, even nice. Maybe things were bad, but it's changed? Relationships are like that, right? Love is complicated. Maybe it was rough, but was it really abusive? What does that mean, anyway? Is that even possible?* (Machado, 2019, p. 223).

On the surface, the public responses to Machado's claims may seem to indicate an attempt to complicate the discourse surrounding abuse through the questioning of "what does [abusive] mean, anyway" (Machado, 2019, p. 223). However, the general tendency to doubt Machado and give her abuser the benefit of the doubt embodies the trend towards the powerful territorializing what gets read as truth and what fiction. Moreover, the carousel of justifications offered for disbelieving Machado illustrates the logically contradictory and disjunctive form of rhetoric employed whenever the powerful are called to account. In the chapter, "*Dream House as* Haunted Mansion," Machado contemplates how the trope of the haunted house speaks to the entanglement of material and social infrastructures I similarly trace in the twinned function of the domestic sphere as both a material and epistemic infrastructure. She reflects:

> *What does it mean for something to be haunted, exactly? You know the formula instinctually: a place is steeped in tragedy. Death, at the very least, but so many terrible things can precede death, and it stands to reason that some of them might accomplish something similar. You spend so much time trembling between the walls of the Dream House, obsessively attuned to the* ***position of her body*** relative to yours*, not sleeping properly, listening for the sound of her footsteps, the way disdain creeps into her voice, staring dead-eyed in disbelief at things you never thought you'd see in your life time. What else does it mean? It means that metaphors abound; that space exists in four dimensions; that if you return somewhere often enough it becomes infused with your energy; that the past never leaves us; that there's always atmosphere to consider; that you can wound air as cleanly as you can wound flesh* (Machado, 2019, p. 127, emphasis mine).

Machado's learned attunement to the position of her abuser's body speaks to how Sacred pedagogical forms and their embrace of poetics can capture not only the immaterial nature of subjective experience and ancestry but also the inscrutability of power dynamics and abuse. In the context of testimony, metaphors like "a haunted home" can provide evidentiary tools for making legible to an audience of varied backgrounds the intangible aspects of personal experience and historically entrenched power

relations. In *Dream House*, metaphor is particularly important for Machado, whose abuser relied primarily on verbal and psychological abuse, which do not by nature leave visible imprints on the body. The spiritual dimension of the haunted home recognizes that "you can wound air as cleanly as you can wound flesh" (Machado, 2019, p. 127): that just because a creature exhibits no scars does not mean they were never sliced open. I'll now turn to *Spill,* which provides a framework of Sacred pedagogy based in the Black feminist poetics of fugitivity and speculation.

Black Feminism and the Art of Speculation

Gumbs prefaces *Spill* with a homage to Hortense Spillers focused on how Spillers' work turns literary criticism into an act of worlding. Each footnote within *Spill*'s poetic vignettes cites a specific phrase from one of the essays in Spillers' collection *Black, White, and in Color* that exemplifies Spillers' Sacred approach to criticism, which embraces lyricism, metaphor, and sensuality. The phrases cited flesh out social criticism with the reality of spiritual vitality, such as "oxygen supply of the social upside down" (cited in Gumbs, 2016, p. 155) and "transgenerational haunting that no ghost-busting has succeeded in exorcizing" (cited in Gumbs, 2016, p. 156). Gumbs explains that when she began the "experiment" (Gumbs, 2016, p. xii) of writing *Spill* as an ode to Spillers "doors opened and everyone came through. All the Black women writers Spillers wrote about and didn't write about. All these characters those Black women writers acknowledged and ignored. All the people living *novelistic* lives *without arcs or arks* to save them" (Gumbs, 2016, p. xii, emphasis mine). Her experience getting intimate with Spillers' use of writing as otherwise worlding led to a profound sense of the biopolitical implications of her own writing, meaning its ability to both foster and impede life, just as Black women writers generations before her recognized the lives of certain Black women while invisibilizing others, and Spillers, writing her criticism generations later, gave space to some of those Black women writers while leaving others behind.

Gumbs' subsequent concern for the Black women "living novelistic lives without arcs or arks to save them," the ones "who made and broke narrative," (Gumbs, 2016, p. xii) informs her approach to character development and narrative perspective throughout *Spill*. Her paralleling of a Black woman's "novelistic" life to both a narrative arc *and* a biblical arc infuses the "material" reality of spiritual life with the "symbolic" realities of individual character development and collective mythologies. Throughout *Spill*, the ostensible protagonist(s) weave through semi-grounded, domestic scenes of contemporary life interspersed with scenes and images grounded in ancestral and mythological knowledges. The layering of the personal and the mythological works to trouble both the humanist divisions between past and present and living and dead, as well as to, like Alexander, emphasize how intergenerational cultural discourses always already infuse individual action and decision-making.

The ambiguity of *Spill*'s protagonist further emphasizes the entanglement of individual consciousness with the Sacred. *Spill* can be read as the story of a specific, individual woman, as its various vignettes are divided into a somewhat linear narrative in which a woman is stuck in an abusive marriage, figures out a way to escape the marriage, and experiences freedom outside the domestic. However, the woman is never named or assigned visually-recognizable features; moreover, Gumbs embeds reflections on the violence of naming and recognition throughout the primary narrative of domestic abuse and escape. Gumbs' anti-identitarian approach to character development is thus partly informed by the racialized and gendered histories of naming, and the use of surnames in particular, as both a practice used to control newly-emancipated slaves in the Jim Crow South and a patriarchal technique for owning and controlling women

(Hartman, 1997, p. 155). Additionally, though, Gumbs' decision to make the spatiotemporal contexts and character identities within a text not entirely legible inaugurates a new form of life writing centered in the Black feminist pedagogies of fugitivity and speculation.

Hartman originated the concept of fugitivity in her 1997 book, *Scenes of Subjection*, whose reflections on the possibilities for Black selfhood and self-making in the Jim Crow South and its landscape of overwhelming violence, domination, and terror lay much of the groundwork for the Black feminist turn to speculation as a form of fugitivity. Hartman's main focus in *Scenes of Subjection* lies in how analyzing the bad-faith legal inscription of the 'free' Black subject post-emancipation illuminates not only the post-Emancipation period as continuous with, rather than departing from, the plantation period but also, on the level of social criticism, reveals the insufficiency of identity frameworks in capturing the textures of subjugation. For example, she describes her hesitancy to postulate gender as central to the subjugation of Black women because of the way white femininity has territorialized cultural understandings of gendered identity. Within feminist criticism, modes of gendered subjugation are thus always read alongside the "social and sexual arrangements of the dominant order," (Hartman, 1997, p. 99) which cannot in turn explain the modes of subjugation experienced by Black women, who have historically been denied access to traditional kinship forms. Black women have also not only *not* been protected by the white cultural imaginary of female sexual sanctity but made more vulnerable to sexual violence by the white cultural imaginary of Black hypersexuality and invulnerability to pain. Hartman argues that, "by assuming that woman designates a known referent, an a priori unity, a precise bundle of easily recognizable characteristics, traits, and dispositions, we fail to attend to the contingent and disjunctive production of the category" (Hartman, 1997, p. 99).

Recognizing "the contingent and disjunctive" (Hartman, 1997, p. 99) nature of identity forms and their cultural production necessitates an awareness of the way in which an individual case study, such as the recorded experiences of a specific Black woman within the archive, can and perhaps should be used to deconstruct sociopolitical structures of subjugation but also risks consolidating the categories of identification used as justification for the very forms of violence under analysis. Hartman proposes an alternative critical strategy that "rather than assuming the subject, [begins] our inquiry with a description of subjectification that did not attempt to name or interpret anything but to simply describe its surface" (Hartman, 1997, p. 100). I'll now turn to a close reading of *Spill* with a focus on how Gumbs deconstructs the surfaces of subjugation while refusing to name its subject by creating a poetics of speculation that brings together the fugitive narrative stance of the poet with pedagogies of the Sacred.

Escaping Definition in *Spill*

Gumbs prefaces each section in *Spill* with a different definition of the titular term, such as "**spill (v)** 2. (of liquid) flow over the edge of its container," (Gumbs, 2016, p. 2) "**spill (v)** 4. (of a number of people) move out of somewhere quickly," (Gumbs, 2016, p. 32) and "**spill (v)** *informal* reveal (confidential information) to someone (Gumbs, 2016, p. 62). The shifting rhetorical context of each section speaks to both the protagonist's changing mindset as she decides to leave her marriage and the instability of identification and naming processes. The field of definitions that overlays *Spill*'s narrative thus also sets up the entanglement of language and life, knowledge and being, in which Gumb locates the dangers of naming and the urgency of poetry.

Spill's opens with a spiritual birthing scene--not a biological birth but --a birthing of the idea that there is a world outside the domestic. The protagonist describes how,

> *first time i knew you existed the rest of the history of the world popped like a bubble unready unworthy and my body wanted only future, only you. the first time i felt you move we were deep underwater under something built to keep us under and i couldn't see anything but I understood there was something above everything. above everything despite everything I would find fresh air and breathe again. above everything despite everything I would free you. my best idea yet* (Gumbs, 2016, p. 13).

The protagonist's underwater birth/rebirth further brings in the histories of the African diaspora and their beginning in the Middle Passage, highlighting the particularly fraught nature of the entanglement between individual identity and community belonging for Black subjects. In *Scenes of Subjection*, Hartman describes how, for the enslaved Black American community and their efforts in building solidarity networks to facilitate rebellions and escape, "the commonality constituted in practice depends less on presence or sameness than upon desired change-- the abolition of bondage. Thus, contrary to identity providing the ground of community, identity is figured as the desired negation of the very set of constraints that create commonality" (1997, p. 59). The early grounding of the Black American community was thus, in a sense, constructed on the desire for there to be no need for the community. Of course, this is different from saying that those within the community disliked each other or that there was no pleasure or comfort taken within the community; rather, Hartman points to how the shared point of identification that created a sense of commonality amongst enslaved Black Americans was also necessarily underrun by deep anger over constant violation, abjection, and enforced immobility, as well as the perpetual state of mourning engendered by a community atmosphere of brutal and premature death. In her latest book, *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals*, Gumbs turns to the ocean and its witnessing of collective drowning throughout the Middle Passage to work through the tensions implicit to Black individuality and collectivity within the African diaspora, as well as the related tension between grappling with past traumas and working towards freer futures. She begins by positing that the act of breathing is itself a communal act in which "you share air and chemical exchange with everyone in the room, everyone you pass by today," (Gumbs, 2020, p. 1) a reality we have all become aware of through the COVID-19 pandemic. Just as the act of breathing is often taken as an individual act when it is in fact a form of wide-reaching communication with all life, including plants and viruses, Gumbs argues that the mass drownings that occurred throughout the Middle Passage continue to implicate everyone living and breathing today; the strategic drowning of 'excess' Black lives on board slave ships and the burgeoning economization of life they represented inform the necropolitical structure of worlding we all still live under, though (as has also been also on full display throughout the pandemic) with vastly disparate levels of susceptibility to state exploitation and premature death.[13] Gumbs explains:

> *And if the scale of breathing is collective, beyond species and sentience, so is the impact of drowning. The massive drowning yet unfinished where the distance of the ocean meant that people could become property, that life could be for sale. I am talking about the middle passage and everyone who drowned and everyone who continued breathing. But I am troubling the distinction between the two. I am saying that those who survived in the underbellies of boats,*

[13] See Christina Sharpe's 2016 book, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* and Kara Keeling's *Queer Times, Black Futures*, particularly the introduction, for in-depth reflections on the relationship between the drownings of enslaved Africans throughout the Middle Passage and the consolidation of modern necropolitics. Sharpe focuses on the expendability of Black life traceable to contemporary policing and carceral cultures, while Keeling focus on the politics of calculation and speculated profit that informed the decision to throw people overboard.

> *under each other under unbreathable circumstances are the undrowned, and their breathing is not separate from the drowning of their kin and fellow captives, their breathing is not separate from the breathing of the ocean, their breathing is not separate from the sharp exhale of hunted whales, their kindred also. Their breathing did not make them individual survivors. It made a context. The context of undrowning* (Gumbs, 2020, p. 1-2, emphasis mine).

When *Spill*'s protagonist is reborn in the ocean, she has not managed to survive through sheer will and thus succeeded where her ancestors failed. She is breathing new life *with* those who drowned throughout the Middle Passage; *with* her ancestors who were not drowned but still captive and forced into equally unlivable circumstances in the New World; *with* the whales and other sea creatures who are now subject to poisoned waters and widespread species extinction in the same waters that saw the bloody beginnings of racial capitalism. The newborn woman in the ocean is born into a context; she is herself but she is not only herself. She breathes the world in and carries its weight in her lungs. To say someone is undrowned gives weight to the violence of ever having *been* drowned but also denies the act its final say over the trajectory of the self.

The protagonist's multivalent origins in the ocean and the history of the Middle Passage can be read alongside subsequent sections' lack of stable characterization. Post-emancipation, practices of fugitivity became both harder and more urgent for Black women specifically, as the domestic and its gendered structure of mobility became a primary zone of surveillance for signs of civilization and successful adaptation to the social order. The increasing stakes of performing domesticity worsened both the vulnerability of Black women working as domestic servants in white homes and the consolidation of heterosexual and patriarchal power structures within Black families trying to hold on to freedom (Hartman, 1997, p. 157).

Gumbs makes clear the pedagogical stakes of domesticity through the next sections' focus on the protagonist's fraught relationship to her mother:

> *she tripped halfway down the porch steps before she felt it. mother deep smothering her ankles. round, locked, growing hot to the untouched. VapoRub tingle to the flesh. what would her mother say. and right there her wild skip turned shuffle like trying on cheap shoes bound by plastic. if the shoe fits, her mother would have sung. and she had never said mama no they don't fit and her mother never wore flat shoes anyway nor did she raise her eyes long or far enough to escape [. . .]*
>
> *but daughter's heartbeat inescapable stole the piece of her pulse that was true. and that's why when she was cleaning the window she noticed the dove as it flew. when her youngest daughter finally escaped she smiled to herself. she knew* (Gumbs, 2016, p. 38).

Gumbs makes a point of noting that the protagonist's mom did not "raise our shero to be ungrateful for the story she almost fit into," (Gumbs, 2016, p. 38) to mark that her mother is not a villain in *Spill*'s narrative and that the story she imagined for daughter, the one her daughter "almost fit into," was built out of love and care based on her perspective on what was possible. However, the fact remains that "hero is not heroine," meaning that ultimately her daughter had to recognize that the story she was raised for was designed to nurture male ambition and futurity only--- that "the damn panties" were never going to "fit right" (Gumbs, 2016, p. 38). Gumbs' narration of the intergenerational transmission of fugitivity is further informed by African diasporic frameworks of the self and knowledge-production, which are necessarily built from an understanding of 'home' as fluid and the necessity of internal methods for finding rootedness amid state processes of displacement. In her analysis of how the Middle Passage informed pedagogies of the Sacred, M. Jacqui Alexander explains,

> *African-based cosmological systems are complex manifestations of the geographies of crossing and dislocation. They are at the same time manifestations of locatedness, rootedness, and belonging that map individual and collective relationships to the Divine* (2006, p. 291).

Pedagogies of the Sacred offer a conception of rootedness and belonging not dependent on homogeneous identity or spatial location. Their common understanding resides in a shared transformation by dislocation.

Gumbs names the next section, "How She Survived until Then," (Gumbs, 2016, p. 45) "then" being her protagonist's fugitive exit as an adult woman. The section gives vignettes of the protagonist as a child and adolescent and her experiences with racism, sexual predation, and bullying. Gumbs highlights the protagonist's lifelong learning from pedagogies of the Sacred as the key to her survival:

> *she is learning it slowly cell by cell. the prison breathing that will save her. she is painting her skin the color of walls with prayers she thinks she is making up. the same prayers her bright ancestors carried to Brazil, whispersong shared to battle enslavement. may they not see me. may they not hear me. may they not smell me. may they not feel wind and think of me. may they forget my very name. it is not quite complete, the spell she is spinning around herself. when she walks home from the store the boys still see enough to harass her. but most days it seems to have worked perfectly on her teacher. for better or worse. day in day out. she act like she don't even know she there* (Gumbs, 2016, p. 50).

Notably, Gumbs frames the protagonist as "[thinking] she is making up" the "same prayers her bright ancestors carried to Brazil" (Gumbs, 2016, p. 50). Her lack of knowledge as to the historical reality of the prayers she whispers under her breath speaks to the dislocatedness Alexander points to as a defining feature of pedagogies of the Sacred. Additionally, though, the content of the prayers, "*may they not see me. may they not hear me*," (Gumbs, 2016, p. 50) points to the freedom to be found in remaining undefined, whether it be in archives or on the schoolyard. In *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes on Belonging*, poet Dionne Brand reflects on a conversation she had with her grandfather, in which he claims to know "what people we came from," (2012, p. 3) but when Brand pesters him for the actual name of their ancestral peoples, "Yoruba? Ibo? Ashanti? Mandingo," ((2012, p. 3) he refuses to answer. Brand comes to realize that her grandfather does not actually know what specific community in Africa they come from; he just wishes he does, yearns for the tangible connection. Their conversation and its mutual disappointments leads Brand to her book-length reflection on the ambiguous spatiotemporality of the African diaspora. She comes to the conclusion that:

> *Having no name to call on was having no past; having no past pointed to the fissure between the past and the present. That fissure is represented in the Door of No Return: that place where our ancestors departed one world for another; the Old World for the New. The place where all names were forgotten and all beginnings recast. In some desolate sense it was the creation place of Blacks in the New World Diaspora at the same time that it signified the end of traceable beginnings. Beginnings that can be noted through a name or a set of family stories that extend farther into the past than five hundred years or so, or the kinds of beginnings that can be expressed in a name which in turn marked out territory or occupation* (Brand, 2012, p. 5-6).

For Brand, the realization that to be part of the African diaspora is to have entered "the Door of No Return," is primarily melancholic; she traces her family's difficulties and her own difficulties as an adult making a home out of one location to the sense of displacement that accompanies not being able to trace or define

your origins. However, interestingly, Brand also introduces a point of connection between the fugitivity inherent to diasporic life and the unique sense of worlding offered by aesthetic creation. She describes how, "to live in the Black Diaspora is I think to live as a fiction--- a creation of empires, and also self-creation. It is to be a being living inside and outside of herself. It is to apprehend the sign one makes yet to be unable to escape it except in radiant moments of ordinariness made like art" (Brand, 2012, p. 19). By "the sign one makes," Brand means white stereotypical and fetishistic characterizations of Blackness, such as loud, unruly, hypersexual, tragedy-ridden, etc. that she argues make "the Black body […] a domesticated space" (Brand, 2012, p. 36). Understanding art as a cultivation of interior opacity before it is a form of cultural engagement embodies the fugitive nature of pedagogies of the Sacred as a search not for "signs to the way home" but for "signs to somewhere free of signs for the body" (Brand, 2012, p. 46).

Concluding Thoughts

What would it mean to build a Sacred pedagogy of selfhood? For starters, aesthetically rich life writings like *Spill* and *In the Dream House* would need to be taken seriously for the challenge they pose to Western epistemology's investment in transparent individualism. Understanding the self, and particularly the self under siege by empire, as Sacred means shifting the questions readers ask of personal narrative from "is it true and how can we be sure?" to "what weight does this truth hold, who is weighed down by it, and who is responsible for sharing that weight." Under a Sacred pedagogical framework, truths are, to evoke Dian Million's work on Native feminist poetics, holographic, continually shaped by and within collective fields of representation and witness (Million, 2013). They spill over the interpretative frameworks set up to make sense of the chaos. Bad faith readers see the spill and try to act as if it never happened rather than sitting with the larger lesson a spill teaches: life will always exceed what any one individual can carry alone.

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Florida's Legislative and Educational Nightmare: Responding to the Multifaceted Attacks on Equity and Excellence

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Florida as a Case of Dystopian Bad Faith

In the contemporary national discussion of bad faith narratives, epistemologies of ignorance, grammars of violence, and selective racial memories in U.S. schooling and society, Florida is a particularly egregious case study. For equity-minded educators and citizens, it has been difficult to keep up with the legislative assault since 2021, accompanied by dangerous rhetoric and a patent disregard for the truth. The attacks have only increased in intensity and broadened in scope since Florida's lawmakers have been further emboldened by re-election and a legislative supermajority in 2023. Florida governor Ronald DeSantis's crusade against "Wokeness" – undefined – has yielded a state-wide assault on public education, including curriculum censorship. Explicitly designed as a backlash to the widespread commitments to racial equity and social justice that emerged in the summer of 2020 (Golden, 2023), these actions also effectively roll back any modicum of progress on education about and for diversity, inclusion and equity (DEI). With both K-12 and higher education under attack, professors of Education, particularly those who teach with a critical lens, are both targets and first responders to their students, alumni and K-12 service partners. This paper is grounded in and informed by these first-hand experiences.

Informed by critical multicultural education (Sleeter & May, 2010), this analysis of curriculum censorship in Florida recognizes education as a site of ongoing struggle for educational equity for historically marginalized populations (Spring, 2016) and undertakes a critical interrogation of policy to ascertain whose/what interests are served and at what cost/benefit to the public good. It reveals curriculum censorship as bad faith legislation that mandates curricular and pedagogical violence on targeted groups, erases histories and criminalizes identity. In this context, educators--particularly professors of education--serve as mitigators of harm vs. good, violence vs. healing in upholding the democratizing and emancipatory promise of public education (Freire, 2018). Doing so, however, requires these professionals to be well-informed in the very knowledge being banned and the laws banning it, have the skills to navigate the legal labyrinth created and the commitment to resist the epistemologies of ignorance being propagated.

Contextualized within the plethora of laws and policies adversely impacting equity, civic and human rights in Florida [Table 1], this critical policy analysis (Diem et al., 2014) foregrounds *The Individual Freedom Act* (2022), Florida's House Bill 7 (HB 7) which amplifies the Florida Board of Education (2021) ban of "critical race theory" (CRT) and on which the 2023 Senate Bill 266 (SB 266) *Higher Education* is built. HB 7 impacts K-12, higher education, and the corporate, and non-profit sectors with relation to workplace training. The purpose of this paper is to:

a) Unveil the political dynamics evident in the genesis and implementation of curriculum censorship as educational policy;
b) Alert fellow educators to the content and intent of HB 7 including its ambiguities and hegemonic ideological foundation; and

c) Respond to censorship (in particular), and anti-democratic legislation (more generally).

The following discussion of the political context of legislation lays the foundation for appreciating the interconnections between/among a single state law and the plethora of laws within and across multiple states that position Florida's multidimensional legislative agenda not as an anomaly but as a national prototype (PEN America, 2023) for bad faith legislation. The analysis of the 'anatomy' of divisive concepts reveals the law's conceptual limitations. This exploration of the dynamics and intent of HB 7 informs the final section of the paper on potential responses to this wide-spread betrayal of the public good.

Political Context of Legislation

Table 1 [after References] represents selected laws and policies in the ongoing legislative assault targeting perspectives and persons who do not fall within the governor's ideological viewpoint. Each line has its own story; this paper explores that of HB 7. None of this legislation arises from documented, *bona fide* problems within education or society; instead, they all truncate rather than expand equal protection under the law. The chronology of the laws represented reveals that first, they came for the Black Lives Matter protestors with HB1;*Combatting Public Disorder* (2021)--banned protests, defined a riot as a group of three or more people and an aggravated riot as involving over 25 people and provided justification for motorists' running over protestors in self-defense (American Civil Liberties Union, n.d.). Simultaneously they came for voting access with SB 90:*Elections* (2021), undoing laudable measures that had contributed to easy and accessible elections (League of Women Voters, 2022). Then they targeted transgender athletes (Associated Press, 2021) with SB 1028 *Education* (2021) before moving into the educational arena by banning "CRT" and re-writing civics education (with financial incentives for teachers to attend workshops on and teach whitewashed history) in K-12 and beginning the surveillance of higher education (Dailey, 2021). These themes were amplified in 2022 and 2023 and extended to rescinding the "resign to run" clause in state election rules allowing the governor to stay in power while campaigning for president (Brown, 2023; Schwartz et al., 2022; TC Palm, 2023).

HB 7 is excerpted from the 'divisive concepts' of Trump's Executive Order 13950 (White House, 2020) instituted as a backlash to the outcry against racism that emerged in summer 2020. The order was crafted by conservative strategist Chris Rufo whose appearance on September 2,2020, on Fox News calling for an Executive Order to abolish critical race training from the federal government was heard by and acted upon by the President on September 22. For Rufo, "critical race theory" served as "the perfect villain" (Wallace-Wells, 2021), to "toxify" a wide range of concepts related to racial equity and social justice (Matzko, 2023). For him diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) posed a political problem to the right: "School districts across the country suddenly started adopting 'equity statements,' hiring 'diversity and inclusion' bureaucrats, and injecting heavily partisan political content into the curriculum … Black Lives Matter and the left were riding high". He credited, "the fight against critical race theory" as "the most successful counterattack against BLM as a political movement" (Golden, 2023). This is confirmation from the source that the nation-wide legislation was racially and politically motivated bad faith legislation.

Although the Executive Order was rescinded by President Biden, "divisive concepts" legislation and bans on "CRT," alongside bans on LGBTQ+ curriculum, have emerged in multiple states around the nation with Florida being among the first to implement both. Keeping track of racist/bigoted legislation has been difficult. In 2023, World Population Review (n.d.) reported that 18 states had signed into law or approved bans on critical race theory with only seven states

where curriculum bans had not been attempted. Writing for PEN America, Friedman et al. (2023) document 86 bans, 50 of which restricted teaching about race.

The Anatomy of the "Divisive Concepts" law

Central to the law are core ideas – nine "divisive concepts" in the Executive Order 13950 (White House, 2020) and eight "specified concepts" in HB 7 (*Individual Freedom*, 2022) - that educators are not allowed to endorse (Table 2). Although Florida teachers are not prohibited from discussing them in an "objective" manner. Florida's version of the law is unique in that the text of HB 7 also incorporates the mandates for the teaching about the Holocaust and African American history, particularly enigmatic given that the governor nicknamed HB 7 the "Stop Woke Act." There are several characteristics of HB 7 - and any "divisive concepts" law that draws on the 2020 Executive Order - that reveal its grounding in bad faith:

1. The concepts constitute legislative ghostbusting, i.e., banning what does not exist in practice
2. They are deliberately vague, precluding clarity on what is allowed or not.
3. They emerge from ignorance about education in terms of theory, professional practice, data and research.

HB 7 as Legislative Ghostbusting

Inspired by the 1984 comedy film (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0087332/), the term, "ghostbusting," is used to reflect the fact that HB 7 banned little that educators did (laws for phantom problems), and solved no problems while creating many more, albeit with much fanfare about protecting families and children from "Woke indoctrination." The governor claimed that HB 7, which he nicknamed the "Stop Woke Act", "codifies the 2021 ban against CRT" (https://www.flgov.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Stop-Woke-Handout.pdf). Ironically, neither "CRT" nor "woke" are mentioned in the law designed to ban them, nor was any definition of "woke" nor evidence of "indoctrination" in public education offered.

Furthermore, although framed as anti-Woke, HB 7 includes the 1994 state mandates for Holocaust Education and the teaching of Black History, specifically "an understanding of *the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping*, and an examination of what it means to be a responsible and respectful person, for the purposes of encouraging *tolerance of diversity in a pluralistic society* and for nurturing and *protecting democratic values and institutions*" (emphasis added; *Individual Freedom Act,* 2022, lines 365-370). This disjunction supports Cotterell's (2022) perspective that HB 7 is designed as a straw person tactic to win an election, at best or, at worst, to dismantle public education and undermine democracy (Schoorman & Gatens, 2023). Meanwhile, state rhetoric serves as discursive kindling for a small group of well-organized, well-funded conservative parents to hound schools and teachers and advance an anti-education agenda (Altschuler, 2023).

Consequently, teaching has become a daily professional trauma for teachers, and the best are leaving the profession (McGrath, 2022); perhaps that, too, could be the state's intent. The number of teacher vacancies have more than doubled since Governor DeSantis took office in 2019 in a state that ranks 48th in the nation in average teacher salaries (Ecarma, 2023). The collective trauma is multidimensional: legally and ethically, educators are caught between compliance with unjust laws requiring intentional miseducation vs. doing right by their students; psychologically, they must witness targeted cruelty against students as safeguards for transgender students are stripped; academically, the joys of teaching have evaporated into a daily battle to keep books relevant to minoritized groups on shelves. Each lesson brings the potential challenge of a hostile parent, with limited expectations of support from administrators who, themselves, are under-educated on how to advocate for anti-racist

curriculum, while unions that protect teachers are being dismantled by state law.

All of this is layered over the unaddressed impact of the COVID-19 shutdown and educators' battle with the governor for the right to mandate masks for their own safety. Teacher vacancies have resulted in shorthanded schools, overcrowded classrooms with long-term substitutes (Ecarma, 2023). Thus, although 2020 held the brief prospect of "a hard reset" for educational equity (Ladson-Billings, 2021), Florida's bad faith legislation creates more problems, solves no problems (including those exacerbated by the pandemic) rendering public education in much worse shape than it was before, devoid of the limited multicultural curriculum in place previously and more vulnerable to political indoctrination, continued accountability regimes or defunding in favor of privatization.

HB 7 as Legislative Confusion

Although laws should clarify not confuse, HB 7 appears to be confusing by design, failing to meaningfully guide instruction (Acevedo, 2023). Opponents of the bill raised a variety of teaching scenarios to clarify how standard teaching practice would be interpreted under the law (e.g., teaching of the Holocaust, slavery, Japanese internment, systemic barriers for accessing healthcare, forced sterilization of Indigenous people, distressing topics for empathetic people). The uniform response was that the law allowed the "objective" discussion of the topics but prohibited teachers from "going out of their way" to "assign blame" to

> *a particular student because of their race or because of their sex or because of their national origin. And essentially say that because you are this or you belong to this particular group, you are at least partly responsible for what occurred in that time* (The Florida Channel, 2022, 2/2/22, time stamp: 1.45 pm.)

This scenario as described is not how such lessons unfold in classrooms. Consequently, HB 7 should have had little bearing on most classroom practice. However, with politicians banking on educators not reading the law themselves, this is not the message heard by the public. Instead, the strident political rhetoric around the law and its desired interpretation, delivered in sound bites for media headlines that villainize public education, make clear what the governor opposes and the costly penalties for violation.

Ironically, the unclear wording of the law allows for multiple interpretations, including reframing HB 7 concepts (see Table 2) as a call *for* (rather than a ban on) multicultural education. This reframing offers "unifying concepts" as positive corollaries to those deemed "divisive" (Table 3). The unifying concepts (see Table 3) are intended as conceptual starting points for engaging with, rather than being gagged by, HB 7.

Despite HB 7's intent, as written, six of the eight specified concepts (1,2,3,5,6, and 7) are statements that few educators endorse in their teaching; #4 represents a poorly worded statement about respect, with only the last concept being at odds with the perspectives of critical scholars.

Concept 1 of HB 7 bans claims of racial/gender superiority, the antithesis of being equals across our differences.

Concept 2 of HB 7 addresses "inherent" racism, a point countered by the fact that racism is learned, not congenital.

Consequently, both concepts *should* inspire curriculum that does not overtly or tacitly promote race, gender, national origin hierarchies or any form of bigotry. As written, both of these HB 7 concepts support multicultural curriculum, while the unifying concepts offered clarify the values espoused in this legislative language. Yet, citizens face curriculum and book bans that explicitly target representations of people of color and LGBTQ+ persons (Friedman & Johnson, 2022) predicated on policy developed

ostensibly to preclude the creation of such hierarchies.

Concept 3 of HB 7 bans endorsing the dubious claim that demographics determine moral character while conflating privilege/oppression (a structural matter) with character (an individual matter). Using HB 7's support for understanding the ramifications of racism and stereotyping, curriculum could uncover the historical assumptions of, for example, Manifest Destiny and/or the deficit-based characterization of various groups that resulted in determining long-term privilege for some vs. oppression for others.

Despite denouncing discrimination, in Concepts 5 and 6 of HB 7, protections accrue not to past victims, but to contemporary beneficiaries of past discrimination. Nevertheless, these attacks on Affirmative Action do not preclude explorations of collective, voluntary, institutional and individual social responsibility for systemic racism, evident in nation-wide commitments to equity and justice in 2020. Concept 7 reveals both a deliberate ignorance of the pain of curriculum violence (Jones, 2022) inflicted through cultural erasure in mainstream curriculum, and the lack of understanding of multicultural pedagogy as critical multicultural educators advocate joy as counter-hegemonic praxis ("Recommitting," 2022, p. 4) in difficult but meaningful discussions of history. The emphasis on guilt, anguish or psychological distress, as well as the concepts centered in Concept 8 reveal a centering of White racial sensibility, designed to thwart commitments to racial justice, with limited concern for the long-term anguish caused by traditional curriculum or state-mandated censorship among minoritized groups.

HB 7 as Legislative Malpractice

The eight concepts reveal a rudimentary and skewed understanding of race and racism grounded in limited awareness of theory, research and practice in anti-racist education. HB 7 represents willful ignorance and/or intellectual sloppiness by allowing the eight concepts to masquerade as an implied definition of CRT, intentionally used by political operatives as a catch-all phrase for political culture wars, while banning social justice, culturally relevant pedagogy, socio emotional learning (Florida Department of Education, 2022), and DEI (in SB 266), thereby undermining public education for *all* students. The multi-pronged attack to simultaneously ban, revise, and promote curriculum (e.g. civics) in alignment with the legislature's political ideology, defund DEI efforts, re-allocate public funds for private education, and fail to engage in consultative decision making with educational professionals bolsters the perception that this legislative agenda is aimed at the destruction of public education (Shapero, 2023; Weingarten, 2023) particularly for historically under-served populations.

A year after HB 7 went into effect, the damage is evident. The lack of critical multicultural understanding and savviness among compliance-oriented local educational administrators has led to flat-footed responses to the legislative assaults. Schools and universities have interrupted much-needed professional development, truncated curricular and co-curricular programming, cancelled courses, and engaged in self-censorship for fear of loss of institutional funding. Attacks on academic freedom, reframing public educators as "the State's mouthpieces" (*Pernell v. Florida Board of Governors,* 2022, p. 8), state surveillance of DEI-related activities (Renner, 2023), the unbridled cruelty in the targeting of transgender people and the hostile take-over of New College have caused a brain drain from the state (Kumar & Hodgson, 2023). All of this makes public education vulnerable to further economic and political exploitation, as critics sound the alarm about dangerous fascist tendencies in the state's educational policies. Figure 1 summarizes these concerns about the intent and impact of this legislative agenda.

What is a Professor of Education to do?

The academic year since the launch of HB 7 in Florida has revealed the urgent need to move from anticipatory compliance (Snyder, 2021) to transformative resistance (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001) and the possibilities for doing so as engaged public intellectuals (Giroux, 2012). The American Association of University Professors (2023) urged "all professional organizations, unions, faculty, staff, and administrators across the country to fight such 'reforms' tooth and nail" (p. 17) while Gendle (2023) underscored the role of tenured full professors in leading this charge. Meanwhile, the Florida Board of Governors' (2020) letter to the state university system is worth remembering:

> *As a powerful and influential voice in Florida, it is time for the State University System, including students, faculty staff and alumni to actively engage in finding solutions to peacefully eliminate racism and discrimination. This will be the critical mission of our twelve state universities, as it is our duty as societal leaders to help end prejudice and to promote social justice for all.*

Professors of Education are particularly implicated in this responsibility as we serve as both the targets of and the first responders to the state attacks on schools and educators, and we readily recognize the parallel deleterious impact on democracy when diversity, so recently celebrated as essentially 'American,' is now abruptly banned.

Developing Critical Consciousness

A foundational step in this process is raising critical consciousness for ourselves and the coalitions we hope to build. Freire & Macedo (1987) underscored the importance of reading the world and the word in order to develop our agency to (re-)write its injustices. It is time to turn these academic concepts into counter-hegemonic praxis. Several facets of this conscientization are salient: reading the language of the laws to ensure awareness of what is and is not banned; "reading" the political context/agenda behind the bans and the language used; identifying the perpetrators and the targets and the systematic pattern that emerges in who benefits and who loses; recognizing how the diverse laws interact to amplify their negative impact. For example, HB 1467 requiring curriculum transparency allows any member of the public to object to books being read in school (see Florida Governor, 2022), further ratcheting up the impact of teachers' self-silencing and SB 256 weakens unions that could resist the state's bullying (Jamieson, 2023).

Understanding the racist and anti-democratic motivations behind the laws are crucial in helping otherwise typically compliant educators push back against the cruelty of the laws and their increasingly fascist leanings. These agendas are self-reported in the media by its brainchild, Christopher Rufo, (see Golden, 2023) who now also serves on the Board of Trustees in the hostile takeover of New College. Rufo's tweets and media appearances have laid out the blueprint for Florida's governor to follow as Florida's plan for the nation in his Presidential campaign: "Remove the attorney general through resignation or impeachment, lay siege to the universities through cutting federal subsidies, abolish the teachers' unions through legislation, and overturn school boards through winning elections" (Beauchamp, 2021). We also must heed the text of what did not pass: HB 999, the parallel house bill to SB 266, proposed eliminating DEI-related majors, minors and curricular programs, abolition of tenure, and the transfer of faculty hiring responsibilities to the university Board of Trustees (Steinbaugh, 2023). Issuing an injunction against HB 7, the judge warned about this "dystopian" vision (*Pernell v. Florida Board of Governors*, 2022) while others have noted parallels with authoritarianism and fascism (McNeill, 2023), particularly evident in the Florida governor's brand of cruelty, using the power of his office to target those with whom he disagrees ideologically.

Acquiring Historical Consciousness

Critical historical consciousness recognizes that contemporary struggles mirror history, which can also reveal how communities have responded to such challenges. Givens (2021) and Russell-Brown (2022) frame HB 7 and curriculum censorship as the contemporary manifestation of historical anti-literacy efforts. According to López et al., (2021), "The anti-CRT campaign is just the most recent of a long line of politically motivated attacks on efforts to provide accurate information about slavery and racism" (p. 6). They note that the contemporary attacks

> *can be understood as part of a larger ideological effort to delegitimize historically accurate presentations of race and racism in American history; to thwart attempts by members of marginalized groups to participate fully in civic life; and to retain political power* (p. 3).

Giroux (2006) reported on a fifty-year strategy enacted by conservative critics of academia that resulted in a political blueprint for the current assault on the academy and the funding of conservative think tanks that undermine academic freedom and use curriculum censorship at the state level against alleged liberal indoctrination. Braukman (2016) offered historical parallels within Florida in a report on McCarthy era investigations by state politicians who opposed racial integration by deliberately connecting desegregation with Communism and being LGBTQ+ in efforts to purge these perspectives from state universities. In 2010, the state of Arizona eliminated Tucson School District's Mexican American Studies Program, arguably among the nation's best examples of ethnic studies, after creating a state ban specifically targeting it as unpatriotic and contriving to overthrow the government (Cabrera et al., 2014). Although the judge in a subsequent lawsuit declared the ban racist (Depenbrock, 2017), it was too late as the program had already been dismantled, causing untold trauma and disruption for students, teachers and the community.

The history of civil rights in this nation and around the world highlight the moral courage and civic responsibility of ordinary citizens and professionals to be upstanders rather than bystanders, vocal rather than silent, resistant rather than compliant as they rose to meet the challenges of their time. Our time as professors of education requires that we move beyond the glorification of their historical actions in textbooks and the rhetoric of "never again" to now honor their legacies in our own professional and civic actions. As we contemplate our role in the education of the next generation's heroes and villains in the human story, how do we heed Carter G. Woodson's (1933) grave observation that, "there would be no lynching if it did not start in the school room" (p. 3)? It is important for all those engaged in the preparation of PreK-12 educational professionals to consider how our own programs have been complicit in the education→ lynching connection and how alternatives have intentionally facilitated humanity, democracy, inclusivity and justice. Even more important, what will our audiences learn from how we act vs. what we say in these challenging times?

Critical Pedagogy

There is no doubt that the backlash against the advocacy for anti-racist education stems from a perception of its success, particularly for minoritized populations. This was evident in the state ban of Tucson's Mexican American Studies Program despite its unequivocal success (Cabrera et al. 2014) and is the rationale for why the Black Lives Matter movement was targeted by the Trump Executive Order (Golden, 2023). Censorship reflects the need for an authoritarian state to control not only the knowledge that students have but also their ability to critically interrogate what they are learning. Critical pedagogy, which is explicitly grounded in disrupting teacher/state/curricular authoritarianism and socialization leading to students' passive, unquestioning compliance, offers a counterpoint. Per Freire (2018), the

underlying theory of critical pedagogy reveals how power operates – either as emancipatory or oppressive - within educational spaces. By problematizing the "banking approach" to education, Freire uncovers how students are socialized into passive compliance, an outcome grounded in the traditional teacher-student relationship that renders students vulnerable to propaganda and exploitation. By contrast, the emancipatory, dialogic approach proposed in critical pedagogy counters the feigned concerns of "indoctrination" underlying HB 7 through multi-vocal, problem-posing. Ironically, however, this is what censorship hopes to shut down through scripted curriculum. This concern was presaged by Dr. Martin Luther King in 1947, discussing the utilitarian *and* moral purposes of education. King warned about our mental lives being "invaded by legions of half-truths, prejudices and propaganda" (para. 3) wherein a narrow education would produce "a group of close-minded, unscientific, illogical propagandists, consumed with immoral acts" (para. 7). Critiquing the education of the segregationist governor of Georgia, King entreated educators to teach students to think intensively and critically lest we wind up with what he termed "the most dangerous criminal" – a person "with reason, but no morals" (para. 4). This purpose of education was echoed by Baldwin (1963):

> *The purpose of education, finally, is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for [themselves], to make [their] own decisions … to ask questions of the universe, and then learn to live with those questions … But no society is really anxious to have that kind of person around. What societies really, ideally, want is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society. If society succeeds in this, that society is about to perish. The obligation of anyone who thinks of [themselves] as responsible is to examine society and try to change it and to fight it - at no matter what risk. This is the only hope society has. This is the only way societies change* (p. 42).

The conditions in Florida may require such pedagogical commitments to be undertaken in the spirit of fugitive pedagogy advocated by Carter G. Woodson and described by Givens (2021). According to the Zinn Education Project (n.d.):

> *The current assault on critical race theory and antiracist pedagogy by the right-wing is unintelligible without the insights offered in Fugitive Pedagogy and Givens' inspirational stories of Black educators who faced down intellectual abuse and physical violence to create counter-narrative curriculums* (para 9).

Fugitive pedagogy conceptualizes Black education as a means of escape, first from slavery and the ban on Black literacy, and subsequently, from curricular violence that denigrated people's humanity in an effort to enslave their minds (Woodson, 1933). Givens (2021) notes that, "Fugitive pedagogy was grounded by a liberatory scholastic vision, not just of school but also of the world" (p. 232). Teachers taught "from a place of political clarity about their alienation in U.S. society … from a posture of criticism; their pedagogy … an extension of a larger political struggle (p. 231). These are pedagogical observations instructive for today's educators.

Collective Consciousness and Agency

Responding to the multifocal challenges to education, democracy, and human rights will require a collaborative multifaceted response forged through collective consciousness. While each of us plays a crucial role as individuals, this is not a struggle to be engaged in alone. Fundamental to the state's political strategy is the disruption of coalition-building through the politics of culture wars. Anti-"CRT" laws such as HB 7 are designed to peel off selected voters who joined the multiracial calls for racial justice in 2020 (López & Sleeter, 2023). The cynicism and cruelty of the focus and volume of Florida's laws, denying students access to culturally meaningful curriculum that would build cross-cultural understanding among the state's diverse student

population, are attacks not merely on vital knowledge but also on community, empathy and capacity building. Disrupting this state agenda requires not only individual action but appreciation of collective action framed within conceptualization of ourselves as mutually dependent community members.

This could occur through collegial collaboration within and across institutions, intra- and cross-institutional strategizing, social and professional networking, coalitions built through professional organizations, governance structures such as faculty senates, unions, advocacy groups, local and state government representatives, and citizen groups. As lawsuits over legislation increase, collective efforts could also involve those willing to challenge the law, offer amicus briefs and serve as expert witnesses. Our individual teaching, research and service agendas could support a collective vision for a democratic state or nation through public education forums or professional development workshops--perhaps offered through the non-profit sector, given institutional abandonment of DEI-oriented teacher professional development based on fear of funding cuts. Might we volunteer to lead or organize these events or attend as learners and supporters? Our local/ civic efforts could involve voter education/registration or GOTV events, town halls, teach-ins, film screenings, university-community partnerships in areas of need that will bolster community building, particularly for those communities marginalized by the legislation.

Laws such as Florida's HB 7, together with the barrage of legislation targeting historically underserved communities, truncating human rights, undermining public education and rolling back voting rights and access are intended not only to undermine the promise of the nation-wide commitments to racial equity forged in 2020 but also to weaken the institutions that safeguard our democracy against authoritarian power. Although Snyder (2021) observed that "Most of the power of authoritarianism is freely given" (p. 8) – reminding us of our own agency as citizens in thwarting authoritarianism - we are also warned that "We tend to assume that institutions will automatically maintain themselves against even the most direct attacks… The mistake is to assume that rulers who came to power through institutions cannot change or destroy those very institutions" (pp. 14-16). Despite the state's plan to make educators mouthpieces for the state we should be comforted that such an outcome cannot be realized without our consent. This paper makes evident the crucial role of professors in the struggle to reclaim our educational institutions and our pluralistic democracy. Although neither was functioning optimally for underserved populations even prior to the pandemic, the legislative attacks over the past few years have rolled back any modest gains in inclusivity and pluralism. Gendle (2023) calls on faculty to be "active advocates and co-conspirators" in this project urging us to "stand up against those who would wish to see the standing and impact of our educational institutions eroded, our programs devalued, and our colleagues marginalized and silenced. Anything less is a gross dereliction of professional duty" (para. 10). In the injunction against HB 7, the judge reminded us of the vital role that educators must play in preserving democracy in this nation.

> One thing is crystal clear—both robust intellectual inquiry and democracy require light to thrive. Our professors are critical to a healthy democracy, and the State of Florida's decision to choose which viewpoints are worthy of illumination and which must remain in the shadows has implications for us all … If our 'priests of democracy' are not allowed to shed light on challenging ideas, then democracy will die in darkness. (*Pernell* v. *Florida Board of Governors*, 2022).

To what extent are Judge Walker's views about professors being critical to a healthy democracy an accurate representation of our professional identities and actions? Professors of education are particularly sensitive to how the

undermining of education through ideologically-driven censorship can jeopardize the education of generations to come, putting at risk the future security and well-being of the nation. There can be no bystanders or onlookers in this potential educational genocide. Professors of education are uniquely positioned on the front lines of this attack, and – if we choose it – of the resistance to it. The future of public education with its democratic potentiality may well depend on how we respond, individually and collectively, as professionals.

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Table 1:
Selected Florida State Legislation 2021-2023

K-12 Education Curriculum censorship: FL BOE ban on "CRT" (6/10/21)[14] HB 5: Civics education (6/22/21) HB 1557: Parental Rights Act [aka "Don't Say Gay" law (3/28/22) Math textbooks rejected (4/18/22) HB 7: Individual Freedom Act [aka Anti "WOKE" law (4/22/22**)** FL Support for AP dropped: African Am. History (1/12 23) Psychology (8/3/23; Reversed: 8/4/23) BLM, George Floyd banned in SS textbooks (5/9/23) African Am. History standards revised (7/19/23) HB 1467: Curriculum Transparency (3/25/22)	**Civic Rights** HB 1: Ban on Protests (4/19/21) 3 > = "Riot"; motorists can run over protesters in street; SB 90: Amendment to Election Law (4/29/21) Restrictions on: voter registration; mail-in ballots; inclusion on vote-by-mail lists; election observers; ability to provide snacks/water to voters in line; access to drop boxes; funding for elections; limitations on how election lawsuits can be settled. Gerrymandering – eliminated 2 Black districts (4/21/22) SB 524: Expansion of voter restrictions of SB 90 (4/25/22) SB 7050: Amends 'resign to run' law (5/24/23) School Boards: HB 477- Term limits (5/9/23); HB 411 -Residency (5/17/23); HJR 31 – Partisan school board elections Elected judges fired (08/5/22; 08/09/23)
Higher Education HB 233: Viewpoint Diversity Survey (6/22/21) SB 7044: Anti-accreditation, tenure (4/19/22) DEI documents 'request' (1/12/23) SB 266 – BOT Hire/Fire faculty; defund DEI; revise general education requirements; emphasis on Eurocentric versions of history (2023) Take-over of New College governance (Jan 2023) SB 256 - Anti-union legislation (5/9/23)	**Human Rights** SB 1028: Transgender female athletes ban (6/1/21) HB 1069: Ban on preferred pronouns; bathrooms (5/17/23) End Medicare coverage for transgender care (June 2022; Nov. 2022) Data "request": Gender-affirming care (1/12/23) Abortion bans: 15 weeks (4/14/22); 6 weeks (2023) SB 1718: Anti-immigrant measures – employment, transportation (5/10/23)

[14] Date in parentheses indicates when bill was signed into law. Most laws go into effect on July 1 of that year.

Table 2

Similarities between Florida HB 7 and Presidential Executive Order 13950

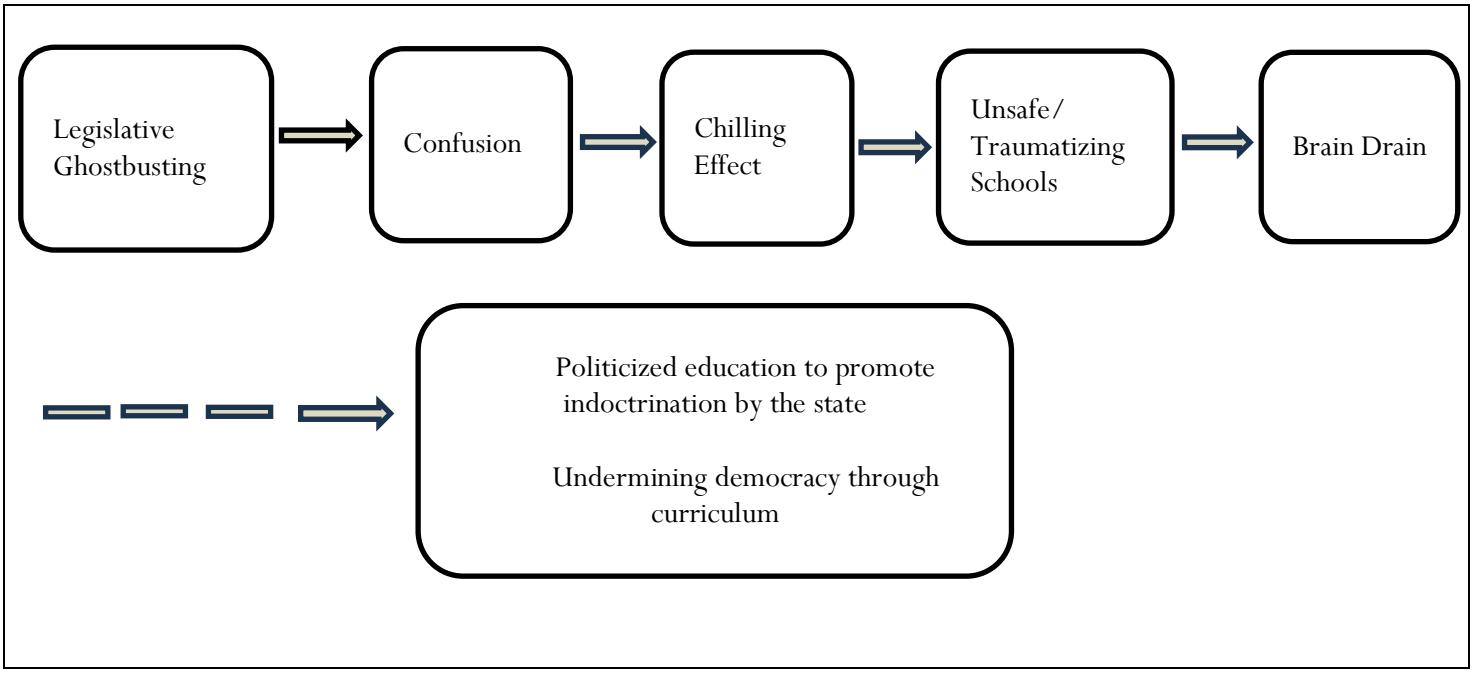
HB7 "Specified Concepts" [listed as prohibited]	**"Divisive Concepts" identified as prohibited in EO 13590**
1. Members of one race, color, sex or national origin are morally **superior** to members of another race, color, national origin, or sex. [// EO #1]	1. One race or sex is inherently **superior** to another race or sex. [// HB7 #1]
2. An individual, by virtue of his or her race, color, national origin, or sex **is inherently racist,** sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously. [// EO #3]	2. The United States is fundamentally racist or sexist. [// HB7 #1]
3. An individual's **moral character** or status as privileged or oppressed is necessarily **determined by his or her race**, color, sex or national origin. [// EO #6]	3. An individual, by virtue of his or her race or sex, is **inherently racist**, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously. [// HB7 #2]
4. Members of one race, color, sex or national origin cannot and **should not** attempt to treat others **without respect to** race, color, sex or national origin. [// EO #4]	4. An individual should be discriminated against or receive adverse treatment solely or partly because of his or her race or sex. [// HB7 #5]
5. An individual, by virtue of his or her race, color, sex or national origin, **bears responsibility for**, or should be discriminated against or receive adverse treatment because of, **actions committed in the past** by other members of the same race, color, sex or national origin. [// EO #7]	5. Members of one race or sex cannot and **should not** attempt to treat others **without respect to** race or sex. [// HB7 #4]
6. An individual, by virtue of his or her race, color, sex or national origin, **should be discriminated against** or receive adverse treatment to achieve diversity, equity, or inclusion. [// EO #4}	6. An individual's moral character is necessarily determined by his or her race or sex. [// HB7 #3]
7. An individual, by virtue of his or her race, color, sex or national origin, **bears personal responsibility for** and **must feel guilt,** anguish, or other forms of psychological distress because of actions, in which the person played no part, committed in the past by other members of the same race, color, sex or national origin. [// EO #7; 8]	7. An individual, by virtue of his or her race or sex, **bears responsibility for** actions committed in the past by other members of the same race or sex. [// HB7 #5; #7]
8. Such virtues as **merit,** excellence, **hard work**, fairness, neutrality, objectivity, and racial colorblindness are racist or sexist, or **were created** by members of a particular race, color, sex or national origin, **to oppress** members of another race, color, sex or national origin. [// EO# 9]	8. Any individual should feel discomfort, **guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress** on account of his or her race or sex. [// HB7 #7]
Source HB 7: https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2022/7/BillText/er/PDF Source EO 13590: Source:https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-combating-race-sex-stereotyping/	9. Meritocracy or traits such as a hard work ethic are racist or sexist, or **were created** by a particular race **to oppress** another race. The term "divisive concepts" also includes any other form of race or sex stereotyping or any other form of race or sex scapegoating. [// HB7 #8]

Table 3
Reframing 'divisive concepts" found in HB 7:
Unifying concepts corollaries to 'divisive concepts'

The following *unifying concepts* correspond with the "divisive concepts" presented in HB 7.

1. *We are equals across our diversity*.
2. It is easy NOT to endorse moral superiority and social hierarchy. We need to make sure our curriculum does not teach this implicitly and explicitly.
3. *Bigotry is learned*; we commit to teaching open-mindedness & humanity.
4. *Demographics do not determine one's moral character*. We should challenge stereotyping that promotes such deficit perspectives. *Privilege and oppression are contextual and intersectional*; everyone experiences both in different ways. Each of these ideas can be productively explored through examples from history or contemporary practice.
5. *We treat each other with respect*. [Concept written in unclear language.] Respect precludes cultural erasure and censorship.
6. *We accept our individual and collective responsibility for community well-being*.
7. *We promote diversity, equity and inclusion and denounce discrimination in all forms*.
8. *We embrace joy and justice in education*.
9. Merit, excellence, hard work, fairness, neutrality, objectivity and racial colorblindness are concepts used in decision making; their validity in/for diverse contexts is contested.

Figure 1
Impact and Intent of Censorship Laws



"This is Texas": S.B. 3 and the Critical Race Theory Panic in Texas

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Abstract

This qualitative case study uses a Cultural Studies lens to examine two white teachers' experiences with epistemologies of ignorance and bad-faith ideologies that led to Texas laws that propagate white supremacism and erase the lived experiences and cultures of their students. Grossberg's (1996) call to interrogate power relationships within a cultural context allows us to explore the complexities of the epistemologies of ignorance (Mills, 1997) where white legislators ban curriculum that does not trumpet Texas and U.S. exceptionalism. The complexities around identity and race in Texas, the history of colonialism, slavery, segregation, and current white supremacy in law and custom are all part of the intricate milieu of Texas education. This study found that despite much media attention, these two teachers did not have deep understandings of the laws created to silence them and were unlikely to engage or defend their students against the erasure of their culture and history. It is a cautionary story to teacher-educators and teachers to avoid complacency because many of today's teachers will not stand against authoritarian laws and practices.

Keywords: White teachers, bad-faith narratives, epistemologies of ignorance, cultural studies, the racial contract, Anti-CRT laws

Nestled off the highway in the south Texas countryside along the Cibolo Creek, you can spot the glory of a century-old church. In the background behind the church are two gated entrances where the honored dead rest, overlooking the prairie. The black, steel gate on the left leads to a paved road that weaves and wraps the inside of the cemetery. But before you enter this restful area, out of the corner of your eye, is a smaller fenced area. This area has no steel gate and no paved roads, rather it is only protected by a small chain link fence; an area that anyone could consider the *other one* compared to the larger cemetery that reflects the care from visiting family members of the departed.

This *other* cemetery, much smaller in size, is dotted with older headstones and plots that seem not to have been touched for years. While standing there, a person might think this is a family cemetery, but upon approach, the names on the headstones are all in Spanish. This smaller gated area, in fact, is an older segregated portion of the cemetery. As a child driving by this cemetery with his grandparents to help clean family members' grave sites, Clayton would pass by that old chain link fence. He always wondered who was buried there and why it was separate from his family. It was one of those moments of having the innocence of childhood that hid the painful truth of the lived experiences of so many across the state. Now, as an adult, he realizes the difference, not just the relative condition of the cemetery, but the barefaced legacy of segregation in Texas, that cannot be erased or paved over.

Segregation, and the violent enforcement of it, is endemic to everything in Texas. In Texas, it is planted in the soil. Even in death, there is no escaping the divisions between those who labored to build the life and city and those who profited from that labor. However, despite the best attempts to bury this violent past and leave it unmarked, it refuses to stay buried.

Cultural Studies and the Critical Dialogue

In this article, we use a cultural studies approach seeking to create what Grossberg, (1996) called "critical dialogue" with the history, geography, laws, customs, and languages around Texas legislation that limits teachers' ability to tell hard truths in Texas classrooms (p. 152). Cultural Studies treats culture as a "site of the struggle" (p. 158) and uses discourse to "to understand the nature of contemporary social life and the central place of communication within it" (p. 153). According to Helfenbein (2003), cultural studies employs a "radical contextuality" that demands theory be placed in contemporary historical realities (p. 12). Thus, we take up that challenge, to contextualize the personal and professional lives of white Texas teachers in a system that increasingly seeks to erase the lived experiences of their students.

Grossberg's (1996) call to interrogate power relationships within a cultural context allows us to explore the complexities of the epistemologies of ignorance (Mills, 1997) where white legislators ban curriculum that does not trumpet Texas and U.S. exceptionalism. According to Grossberg (1996), cultural studies tackles

> *…concepts with which to cut into the complexity of the real, in order precisely to reveal and bring to light relationships and structures which cannot be visible to the naïve naked eye,' relations of power and contradiction, of domination and struggle.* (p. 153)

Cultural studies creates the tools for questioning the ideologies that brought us to this point as well as the ideologies of resistance that may get us out of it. The complexities around identity and race in Texas, the history of colonialism, slavery, segregation, and current white supremacy in law and custom are all part of the intricate milieu of Texas education.

As the events have been moving quickly and the impacts so rapid, a traditional literature review is not as useful in encapsulating the discussion around the phenomena of the 2021 Texas Senate Bill 3 (S. B. 3) as literature, like this one, take years to produce. Thus, using the cultural studies approach to the events that led to S. B. 3 and its effects allows for a discussion of the cultural context of the phenomena in question (Grossberg, 1996).

Conceptual Framework: The Racial Contract, Bad Faith, and Epistemological Ignorance

Beyond the cultural studies approach, our conceptual framework also pulls from sources that, while separated by years and contexts, are connected in their ability to describe the epistemological detachment that created the backlash against racial progress in Texas.

In *The Racial Contract* (1997), Mills explained that the language Americans use to describe their ability to incorporate tolerance, inclusion, and desegregation were created to placate white people into believing in their inherent goodness, while still maintaining the ideology of white supremacy, a foundational belief of American society. Mills (1997) described the "racial contract" as a counter to the "social contract" as described by Enlightenment philosophers (p. 11). While the *social contract* describes the agreement between citizens and their government that secures safety and freedom, the racial contract cemented "subpersons" into a lower caste while still demanding fidelity to the system that placed them there (p. 11).

Mills explained that political, economic, and physical position of Black and Brown people in America requires an intentional ignorance on the part of whites. White people, as this study demonstrates, must live in ignorance or the cognitive dissonance would be so great that they would not be able to function in the society they have built. As Mills (1997) explained,

> *One could say then, as a general rule, that white misunderstanding, misrepresentation, evasion, and self-deception on matters related to race are among the most pervasive mental phenomena of*

> *the past few hundred years, a cognitive and moral economy psychically required for conquest, colonization, and enslavement. And these phenomena are in no way accidental, but prescribed by the terms of the Racial Contract, which requires a certain schedule of structured blindnesses and opacities in order to establish and maintain the white polity.* (p. 18)

To admit that their society, power, land entitlements, and all manners of life depended and currently depends on the mistreatment of others, would mean that these descendants of colonizers are in effect, evil, and whether through their ancestral ties or current policy, have engaged in great harm to entire societies.

To live as an oppressor requires an epistemological ignorance of the actions that created the reality they live in, causing an epistemological detachment. One term for this is alethophobia, fear of the truth, or the inability to believe uncomfortable facts about your nation or group. This detachment is also referred to by Sartre as *bad-faith* (Gordon, 2002). To Sartre, bad-faith is a type of self-deception, that involves, "stripping the individual of his involvement in history" (p. 242). Or, as an internet post in 2021 stated, "Imagine your history being so horrible you want to ban people from learning it" (Drake, 2021). Thus, the forgetting of things and the erasing history in order not to face the truth is, to Sartre, an act of bad-faith. The political and social efforts of conservatives that seek to keep students, particularly white students, away from learning about the histories of white complicity and abuse of others, is a form of bad-faith and alethophobia. This intentional ignorance, then weakens white people psychologically, according to Mills, in that people must continually lie to themselves and defend indefensible misunderstandings and misinformation. As Mills (1997) explained,

> *…the Racial Contract prescribes for its signatories an inverted epistemology, an epistemology of ignorance, a particular pattern of localized and global cognitive dysfunctions (which are psychologically and socially functional), producing the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the world they themselves have made* (Mills, 1997, p. 18).

Mills (1997) continues his discussion in his essay on *white ignorance* (2007) explaining that one problem with intentional ignorance is that the truth continually leaks through, and when that happens, alternative narratives from the truth must become official dogma. To maintain themselves and their epistemological position, whites create a narrative where the sins of the past are aberrations from the just, fair, and right actions that brought us to this, the best possible world. Mills critiqued as "naïve" historians who characterize U.S. political culture as essentially "egalitarian and inclusive with the long actual history of systematic gender and racial subordination… relegated to the status of a minor "deviation" from the norm" (p. 17). "…in effect it turns things upside down. Sexism and racism, patriarchy, and white supremacy, have not been the *exception*, but the *norm*" (p. 17). As this study indicates, in Texas and across the South, the truth is challenging the easy ignorance of white supremacy, and so truth must be destroyed.

To sum up, Mills exposed the epistemic detachment that is the act of being white, and especially white and conservative in colonized spaces like Texas. There are few things that are globally agreed upon, even among the white dominated countries of the Global North, yet this one remains, that white ignorance of the histories of colonization, genocide and oppression must be sheltered in a sugar coating of goodness, godliness, and civilization. As Mills (1997) explained, to maintain this white ignorance,

> *…one has an agreement to misinterpret the world. One has to learn to see the world wrongly, but with the assurance that this set or mistaken perceptions will be validated by white epistemic authority, whether religious or secular.* (p. 18)

No alternative explanation for the world of today will do, other than that we live in the best possible world, dominated by white people.

Perspectives and Positionalities

To take up antiracist work with integrity, qualitative researchers have largely rejected the concept that any research can be neutral and have expressed that even if possible, it would be undesirable to treat participants with a lack of care and concern (Minikel-Lacocque, 2013; Yosso, 2005). Positionality allows for the possibility of transparency in research and an affirmation that the *who* in research matters in the ways we ask questions and approach the study (Boucher, 2018). As to our positionalities, Clayton identifies as a white Hispanic male. He is a middle school social studies teacher on the southside of San Antonio, TX who works to create solidarity with his students through rigorous coursework and incorporating his own experiences growing up in Texas into his teaching. Michael identifies as a mostly white male of European and Choctaw decent. A former social studies teacher from Minneapolis, Minnesota, he is a teacher-educator and researcher who seeks to build capacity in teacher candidates to dismantle the oppressive systems in solidarity with the people of the Southside San Antonio community.

Both researchers understand that whiteness and race are socially constructed and not biological concepts and that these ideas have been used to enslave and oppress people around the globe (Painter, 2010). White privilege and whiteness are fluid in that the definition of whiteness has changed over time, and hegemonic in that whiteness is pervasive and flexible so that it is sometimes impossible for individuals to see that they are participating in whiteness (Gazley et al., 2019). It is especially complex when discussing colonized, Indigenous peoples in the land that became the U.S.A. (Boucher, 2020; Wilderson, 2021).

Epistemologies of Ignorance in Texas: A Cultural Studies Approach

In an oft-repeated tweet with over one million views, Texas Governor Greg Abbott lobbed,

> *Our schools are for education, NOT indoctrination. Laws I signed this year will get woke agendas out of our classrooms and put parents back in charge. To fully empower parents in Texas, we must deliver school choice to every family* (Abbott, 2023).

In modern day Texas, intentional ignorance flows out of the halls of the legislature and into the homes, schools, and social lives of all Texans. Unfortunately, this is not just an issue specific to the Lone Star State, but rather one plaguing states across the South where multicultural education has been curtailed or even erased in a new *whitelash* that reestablishes white supremacy as the organizing ideology of curriculum and pedagogy (Anderson, 2020; Kaplin, 2023; Lowery, 2023; Krugman, 2021).

Texas has a long history of racial violence that is systematically kept from the study of Texas history and, thus the consciousness of white Texans (Anderson, 2020; King, 2003; Martinez, 2020). However, after the unprecedented protests following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Americans of all backgrounds worked to break down the structural facade of racism that many have hid behind for centuries. The protests were part of a long tradition of struggle for racial equity in America and across the world that began even before the first enslaved people were brought to American shores, however, in this generation, there was a coalition building between whites, Blacks, and other people from marginalized identities that is perceived as a major threat to the structures of white supremacy in America (Fisher, 2020: 2022).

Sociologist Dana Fisher (2020; 2022) explained that three things made the George Floyd protests different from earlier movements. First, the pandemic and the pent up anxiety around the Trump administration's openly racist

and oppressive policies and rhetoric. Second, the diversity of racial, ethnic, and economic statuses of the protesters created a new type of intersectional activism (Fisher & Rouse, 2022). Thirdly, the violent government responses to the protests. All these factors combined to make this moment one where real change was demanded from many corners of society (Fisher, 2020). During that summer and soon afterward, statues of Confederate soldiers and generals were brought down. Schools, parks, and military bases were renamed for heroes, rather than for enslavers and those who fought to keep people in chains and curriculum was being reassessed to better reflect a recentering away from white heroes toward a more democratic view of American history and culture (Hannah-Jones, 2019; Kenin & Fuller, 2021).

However, this consensus about racial change led to an inevitable backlash. Americans who were concerned about a loss of their own status, launched so-called *culture wars* that were *fighting for the soul of America*, uncritically demanding a return to a time where the power and definition of whiteness and maleness was unquestioned (Blow, 2021). Like so many other times when minoritized groups demanded equality, there is again a movement to reapply a whitewash to history where teaching about major historical events are built upon bad-faith, false narratives intended to impair individuals while also applying a balm of white patriarchy to heal the hurt feelings of those whose harm others (Anderson, 2020; Gordon, 2002).

CRT Becomes International Conservative Strawman

The legal theory of Critical Race Theory came out of the Critical Legal Studies movement in the 1970s. The movement sought to bring into the light the biased and racial nature of both laws and court decisions, even after the 1954 *Brown* decision ended the legal practice of *de jure* segregation (Bell, 1980). Along with others, Harvard law professor, Derrick Bell used the foundations of CLS to explain that only when the interests of whites and Black converge, is racial progress made (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Bell and his colleagues moved the discussion of equality before the law toward a centering of race as both intent and impact of laws and decisions.

In education, the work of CRT scholars Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate set the foundations for scholars who have challenged white supremacy in education (Crowley, 2016; Crowley & Smith, 2015; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, Ladson-Billings, 1998; Matias & Boucher, 2021; Taylor, 2023). According to Ladson-Billings, (2013), CRT scholars subscribe to tenets identified by Delgado and Stefancic (2017):

> *Racism is a normal part of American Society and is not an aberration. It is baked into law, society, and politics*
>
> *Racial progress is only made when the interests of whites in power converge with Black and Indigenous people.*
>
> *Race is socially constructed and not biological*
>
> *There are intersecting levels of oppression that are felt by different people and the law seldom addresses that concept. People must have been harmed for a single reason and often cannot claim that here are multiple layers to their experience with discrimination*
>
> *The words and experiences of Black and Indigenous people create a counter-narrative to that must be considered when producing law and policy.*

In 2013 University College London (UCL) students launched "Why is my curriculum so White?" (Peters, 2015; Suissa & Chetty, 2018; Saha, 2018) and South African students demanded #Rhodesmustfall in 2015 (Bosch, 2017). During the 2020 protests over George Floyd's murder, Conservatives tried to find a reason for these protests that did not involve the truth that white people still benefit from slavery and genocide, nor the actual lived experience of people of color. They looked for an ideological

strawman in the spirit of the *outside agitator* of past civil rights movements (Fortin, 2020).

Beginning in the early 2010s, Conservatives and white supremacists in the United Kingdom had already circled around Critical Race Theory (CRT) as an explanation for why students would form movements against white supremacy in universities curriculums (Mutua, 2000; López & Sleeter, 2023). By 2020, right-wing commenters were ready to blame CRT for the Black Lives Matter protests and the destruction of monuments to white colonizing heroes from Cape Town, South Africa to Bristol, in the U.K. (Birnbaum, 2020; Farrer, 2020; Harlan et al., 2020). CRT was labelled as the ideological vehicle to fuel *white replacement* and even *white genocide* (Clark, 2020; Pogue, 2020). These conservative commentators explained that CRT had taken over in teachers, schools, and government institutions and that it was leading to multiracial nature of the protests. Hard-pressed to understand why white people would protest for Black lives, these commentators explained that white peoples' feeling of guilt for being white were caused by CRT and claimed that white protesters were mentally ill because of it. To these commentators, demanding change to the system was a pathology called *wokeness* (Romano, 2020; Trilling, 2020).

When the language of S. B. 3 was written in Texas and across the South, it directly targeted the CRT tenets as interpreted by European white supremacists, that race is a social construction, that racism is pervasive in society, and that counter-stories of people who have experienced racism in America should be valued. The bill bans ideas in the classroom like,

> *…the advent of slavery in the territory that is now the United States constituted the true founding of the United States; or with respect to their relationship to American values, slavery and racism are anything other than deviations from, betrayals of, or failures to live up to the authentic founding principles of the United States, which include liberty and equality.* (Castillo et al., 2022)

and the law expressly bans the *1619 Project* from K-12 schools (Hannah-Jones, 2019; Lopez, 2021a; Najarro, 2022)

To shore up their ideological position and to spread more ignorance among the U. S. public, stories were planted in rightwing media about white people being forced to face their privilege, causing distress and guilt in students, teachers, and employees in business and government. CRT was to blame for these experiences (Wolfe-Rocca & Nold, 2022; Wong, 2021). This, of course, was a lie (Wolfe-Rocca & Nold, 2022). Debunked stories of white children coming home or emailing senators decrying their treatment at the hands of woke teachers flooded rightwing media and were quickly amplified by Republicans in legislatures (Blackburn, 2021; Tensley, 2021; Wong, 2021).

Texas Leads the Way in Moving Backwards on Race and Gender

In Texas, Senate Bill 3 (S. B. 3) became law as a remedy to this manufactured problem (Lopez, 2021a). Specifically, it states that teachers are not allowed to,

> *…require or make part of a course inculcation in the concept that: one race or sex is inherently superior to another race or sex; an individual, by virtue of the individual's race or sex, is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously*

While that sounds neutral on a quick read, when read against the backdrop of the actions taken to demonize the teaching of race and racism, it has served its purpose of chilling most discussions of race in classrooms (Najarro, 2022).

Conservatives crowed that they had vanquished CRT in Texas, however, the issue was never CRT, as that was not specifically discussed in classrooms in the U. S., but the vague language of non-racism was used for the express purpose of making it flexible enough that all discussions of race or racism fall under the law's umbrella while not specifically banning all

such talk (Castillo et al., 2022; Waxman, 2022). The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), the K-12 standards in Texas, specifically call for discussions of the Ku Klux Klan and other racially violent groups in history; however, the law now changes the narrative from actions that are indicative of colonization, slavery, and segregation to acts of individuals that are *betrayals* of the founder's purpose, exactly as Mills (1997) described the bad-faith/false narrative a quarter century ago. As this study found, the effect of the language in the law, intentionally stopped conversations of race in Texas classrooms, and made teachers who were willing to try during the pandemic, now avoid the topic altogether (Hernández & White, 2021).

Beyond the overall discussion of race, this law also works to create ignorance by removing primary sources about the Chicano movement, historical writings of Frederick Douglass, the women's rights, and civil rights movements. It takes another step backward in removing standards on *Letters from a Birmingham Jail* (DeMatthews, 2021). S. B. 3 also directs teachers to deliver opposing viewpoints on settled matters,

> *a teacher who chooses to discuss a topic described by subdivision (1) shall, to the best of the teacher's ability, strive to explore that topic from diverse and contending perspectives without giving deference to any one perspective.*(Johnson, 2021)

This passage was interpreted by a curriculum specialist in a wealthy suburb of Fort Worth to contend, "And make sure that if you have a book on the Holocaust, that you have one that has an opposing, that has other perspectives" (Hixenbaugh & Hylton, 2021). The backtracking was swift and even the author of the bill disavowed the comments on the Holocaust, but the mindset of caution and fear has now been firmly placed in the minds and actions of Texas teachers and administrators that no topics where white people are not heroic, good, moral, and ethical, will be tolerated.

Taking their direction from the anti-CRT rhetoric on the right, *Moms for Liberty* was founded in Florida in 2021 and immediately became a national force to ban books and curriculum from schools that white parents found objectionable (SPLC, 2023). Beginning in the summer of 2021, as part of the coordinated strategy to gin up white panic over CRT, school board meetings were inundated with people, some of whom were parents of children in schools, but most were not, in often violent confrontations (Borter et al., 2022). In 2023, there began a shift away from concern over books that dealt with race, to books that dealt with gender identity and sexuality. Texas legislators were early to ban books from libraries that explain gender and sexuality, characterizing them as pornography (Alter, 2022).

As part of the panic, Texas now leads the nation in banning multicultural and gender content in classrooms (Lopez, 2022). Book bans are not new to Texas, but this recent tide of bans has surprised even longtime Texans. Texas schools found themselves flooded with challenges to books in libraries and classrooms (Beauchamp, 2022). In March of 2022, a school district in Texas finished a review process of books based on a list from a Republican state lawmaker. From this review, more than 100 books were removed after 432 were targeted by the same book list. Books like Pulitzer Prize winning *Maus* (1991) a graphic novel depicting the Holocaust along with many books that portrayed slavery, segregation, and books that deal with gender identity and sexuality (Alfonseca, 2022). Grossberg (1996) wrote:

> *Culture is the site of the struggle to define how life is lived and experienced, a struggle carried out in the discursive forms available to us. Cultural practices articulate the meanings of particular social practices and events; they define the ways we make sense of them, how they are experienced and lived, and these already interpreted social practices can be, in turn, articulated into even larger relations of domination and resistance.* (p. 158)

In June of 2023, Governor of Texas, Greg Abbott signed into law a measure that prohibits "sexually explicit" books from libraries across the state (Dearman, 2023).

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission created a standard that "… forces book companies to put ratings such as 'sexually explicit' or 'sexually relevant'." Books that would be marked as explicit cannot be sold to districts, and if already in the library must be recalled (Dearman, 2023).

As Grossberg, explained, the battle over culture is never far from the surface, and analyzing that battle is the key to understanding the events that shape our lives, work, and the reality of teaching and interactions with communities.

Method

In the middle of this struggle for truth against lies, inclusion against exile, and solidarity against opposition, are the teachers. Specifically, the white teachers in Texas who work to build relationships of solidarity with students across differences of race, language, and cultures (Boucher, 2020). Over 80% of teachers in the U. S. are white and most are female (NCES, 2023). In Texas, white teachers make up over 60% of the positions in schools (Education Trust, 2022). Thus, the perspectives of this important demographic matters when it comes to policies that are made, specifically to cater to white people's feelings (Matias, 2016). This article comes from Clayton's study of social studies teachers in Texas that examined the complexities of navigating S.B.3. by teachers working to stay true to their own ethical commitment to teach their students in a state that segregates by race and commits curriculum and pedagogical violence against their students. It highlights two participants, Johnny, and Gina. Johnny is a white Hispanic male and Gina, a white female. Both are in their 30s and teach U. S. History in Texas. The questions began with an approach to examine teachers' perceptions of some basic teaching frameworks such as Culturally Relevant Pedagogy before asking about the specific effects of S. B. 3 (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The rationale was to allow teachers to discuss their work and the effects that legislative agendas have had on the experiences of teachers in the classroom.

This study was conducted using face-to-face interviews, teacher lesson plans and corresponding created materials. During the interviews participants were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. What do you think culturally relevant instruction is?
2. How do you assure culturally relevant material is provided in your classroom?
3. What do you know about the new state law, S. B. 3?
4. Do you feel that all Texan's histories are included in the curriculum?
5. Due to this law, do you feel restricted in what you can say or teach?
6. How do you ensure your students of color get to see themselves in history?

Following the recorded interviews, Clayton used the Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (Powell & Cantrell, 2021) to analyze the participants' lesson plans and the corresponding created materials.

Sampling

The study used purposeful sampling (Mertler, 2022, p. 192) selecting 8th grade and 11th grade history teachers in Texas schools to find how they are navigating the Anti-CRT law, S.B. 3 in Texas. This law targets conversations about race/ethnicity and pulls the learning about marginalized groups from *power* standards, demotes them to *supporting* standards, or removes them in their entirety, thus making them less likely to be taught. The goal was to see how teachers approach implementing a law that targets many students they serve to see if these teachers will find ways to circumvent the law to include representation of their students' cultures and identities or will they fall in line and work against their students.

Findings

Upon conducting the interviews, Clayton found that the two teachers were not aware of some of the basic concepts of culturally relevant instruction (Ladson-Billings, 2021; Paris, 2012) so during the interview process, a large portion of the discussion focused on the topic of culturally relevant instruction and pedagogy and their contextual definitions. After discussion, the participants and Clayton came to use the definition by Baines et al. (2018), "normalizing and correcting the histories, heritages, languages and belief systems that have been long omitted, marginalized, or distorted" (p. 11). Generally, teachers in the interviews had only a limited understanding of what this type of teaching practice included but were aware of using strategies that focused on students' funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 1995; Yosso, 2005).

Gina took a focused approach to her students' lived experiences in the hopes that possibly this would bring in cultural awareness and understanding, stating that she wanted to connect students learning to their community and lived experiences, "…something that they know about. Something that they've seen in their everyday lives. It's a movie they've seen…or maybe something they have seen on social media." This idea of connecting to students came up often yet the question remained whether she was able to do that, given the restrictions from S. B. 3.

Johnny was less concerned about making those connections. He explained that he only used what had been provided by the district. "[The] text that we use, resource guides, and Instructional focus documents. These are classroom text and other items that are provided by districts, which in turn are provided by book publishing companies." This response reflects a position among many teachers that, if they stick to what has been handed to them that they will avoid trouble. However, as laws become more and more restrictive, as has been the case in Florida's standards around African American history, there is no end to the demands that white supremacist legislators will place upon educators, especially if they try to keep their heads down and quietly follow the rules (Planas, 2023).

Participants interviewed were split on knowing what S. B. 3 did and not even knowing about the law itself. Johnny did know about S. B. 3, had only heard it referred to as the anti-CRT law, and explained that he only knew that "we aren't allowed to teach any CRT." However, in a follow up, he could not provide any form of definition, but said he, "knew it was about race."

This gets to a serious problem with the teachers who are being asked to avoid talking about something that they are incapable of defining. As teacher education programs continually work to bring teachers understanding of culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 2021) and culturally sustaining (Paris, 2012) pedagogies, teachers who are lacking basic understanding of these concepts have no defense against the narratives that would call them out for teaching CRT.

When asked about the purpose of the law, Johnny explained that "a lot of it has been watered down or it's a different narrative. Then, I guess, sometimes it's a little bit whitewashed. It's not the whole truth. It's some truth, but not the whole story. It's a certain perspective." This response helps us to understand the thinking behind the earlier responses that seemed timid and careful. If the purpose of these laws is to quell the discussion of history and "water it down" than these teachers feel under obligation to do just that. Their concern is not unwarranted as the laws continually get more and more punitive for speaking out about this whitewashing of history.

When asked about the depth of understanding that their students get about people who are not part of the white colonizers, Gina said specifically talking about Indigenous peoples "we barely graze the surface." This idea of barely grazing the surface is an intentional part of S. B. 3 where the 11th grade standards number over 200 and yet there are less than five standards

that address Native peoples. Teachers who must cover a large amount of material about the histories of white Texans must move on quickly if they are going to meet their testing deadlines. On this note, Gina expressed frustration over not being able to broaden her students' understanding of people colonized by the people who ARE in the standards. I am, "limited in what I teach, there's so much that I have to teach in a short amount of time frame that I hate it that I can't cover more than just what's in the textbook. I would love to do that, but time is very limited."

The S. B. 3 law widens an already large target on the backs of teachers. Gina's fear expressed by her and other teachers in this study is palpable and real. The environment created by white supremacists in the Texas legislature and the Governor's office have made it so that teachers are, as Gina expressed, "walking on eggshells because I don't want to say something or offend someone and then later it gets reported, or I could be in danger of losing my license." A classroom is supposed to be a space where students can discover new learning and have a conversation with adults who help guide them in this learning, but instead to avoid trouble, both Gina and Johnny feel like they must tell their students to 'google it' or 'research it on their own time' when discussing anything that does not fit the narrative of white superiority and goodness.

The intentional ignorance littered throughout S. B. 3 has the lasting impact on already marginalized communities not being able to see themselves in history, or if they are represented, it is in a negative light. Teachers in Texas are being intentionally vague in ways they highlight the histories of their students. They know that they will only capture their students' attention when they use culture as a point of contact with students but, at the same time, they are being told that pointing out Mexican Americans in history is somehow *controversial* and thus, forbidden. We have entered a time where racial memories, the lived experiences, the histories of our students have been suppressed for so long that the system is now working double time to keep suppressed the marginalized Texas communities. S. B. 3 is just one of many laws that are intended to amplify white supremacism in the school curriculum. Conservative lawmakers like to bring up that they are putting an end to *wokeness* and a *wokeness* agenda. But as Gina said "I'm not there to push an agenda. That's not my job, my job is to teach." White supremacist lawmakers impose epistemologies of ignorance and depend on the fear of violence to inflict ignorance upon the very people, teachers, who are charged with equipping the populace for participation in democracy. Grossberg (1996) explained that:

> *…if we are to understand ideology as a contested terrain, we must recognize that ideological struggles are never wholly autonomous; they are themselves located within, articulated with, a broader field of economic, cultural, and political struggles.(*p. 161)

When teachers are afraid to enact their purpose, all students, even white students, are poorer for not knowing the truth and will inevitably suffer when democracy is lessoned or eradicated.

Conclusion

"We cannot live social reality outside of the cultural forms through which we make sense of it. Ideology involves the claim of particular cultural practices to represent reality" (Grossberg, 1996, p. 159). Systematic and violent marginalization of knowledge critical of white supremacy has been recorded by scholars and resisted by students for decades.

The timid responses of the participants are both a warning to teacher educators who hope this moment will pass and that teachers will ignore the mandates from above. It should also frighten us that these teachers, no matter how well-intentioned, will ultimately pass down white supremacist narratives handed to them. These two are not fighters. In fact, very few white teachers are fighters. When teachers do fight, as

we have seen in Texas, Oklahoma, and Florida, they are met with harsh discipline from above and death threats from below (Ferñandez, 2020; O'Connell-Domenech, 2022).

A hopeful conclusion to this discussion would be to lay out the opposition and show how teachers and academics are fighting against these laws. We wish that were the case. The ease at which Texans moved away from activism on race and gender to become quelled is quite stunning to Michael, a transplant to Texas, but not to Clayton, a Texas native. Michael has been reminded that Texas is a dangerous place, getting more dangerous every day, and Texas teachers have a lot to deal with. Texas has the most banned books in the nation (Carter, 2023) According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA), there were 77, 000 threats against schools in the 2022-23 school year (New, 2023). School board members or members of the public who stand up against white supremacist policies receive death threats, are doxed, and face harassment in public (Lopez, 2021b). Since 1970, Texas is second to California at 192 school shootings (CHDS, 2023). Texas has set a new record for mass shootings in 2023, breaking the previous high last year (Berkowitz, 2023). The threats against schools and teachers are real and stepping out of line to defend a book or an idea will bring permanent and unacceptable consequences.

As far as collective action is concerned, gerrymandering has left a majority-minority state under white-conservative rule. The national conversation about the border, using terms like "invasion" and calls for removal of immigrants from the U.S., keeps teachers silent to protect their undocumented students (Salam, 2023). Teachers in Texas are not unionized to any significant degree. The professional organizations have created documents that show how to comply with S. B. 3, rather than fight against it (TCTA, 2021). This 2023 legislative session saw even more draconian rules, working to cow professors and universities from challenging white supremacy (Santos, 2023). The legislature removed all Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs from universities and colleges, banned hiring practices that sought to diversify the faculty at universities and banned all programs to help white professors, staff, and public employees learn more about race (Monroe, 2023). For many teachers, keeping the news off, focusing on their students, and hoping things get better is the best coping strategy they can imagine. When asked about it, they reply, "This is Texas."

It takes a strong person to stand and hold their own and evidence shows that most white teachers will not do that (Boucher, 2020). This study should stand as a warning to other states who feel they are immune from the forces of authoritarianism and white supremacy that govern Texas, that they should not be complacent.

Right now, teachers and academics have the power and the choice to wipe away the structures that have been carefully built to oppress and marginalize, or we have the power to again solidify those structures, casting the memory of a better vision of the future into an impenetrable hole where remembrances, people, and the natural world are entombed by raw greed and avarice. The coming years will see epistemologies of ignorance grow in power and inevitably will seize control without an educated public standing against it. That is why education has been so targeted in this era. An educated electorate will not allow authoritarian rule, but an uneducated one could. This moment is a tipping point for democracy. It will be recorded as the end of all freedom dreams of those disregarded, brutalized, and robbed of humanity, or the beginning of an insurgency that finally eradicates the global dominance of colonialism, unfortunately, our teachers may not be up to the task of fighting against the worst impulses of people elected to represent them.

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A Tale of Two Kansas Cities: Truth is in the Eye of the Beholder

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Abstract

We discuss the findings of a research study into experiences of school desegregation in the Kansas City region and draw forward narrative interpretations of curriculum stakeholders with respect to some of the experienced multiple truths of school desegregation. Moreover, we explore the use of the lens of bad faith, ignorance, and selective memory to shed light on nuanced facets of school desegregation and engaging in the research landscape of school desegregation.

Keywords: Desegregation; Racial Memories; Narratives; Knowledge Validation; Institutional Review Board

School desegregation in the United States is a phenomenon that may be explored in terms of multiple truths. A historical reading of school desegregation is often described as legal and educational acts, such as through a singular focus on *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Another truth of school desegregation is that it has set in motion enduring inequities in schooling for African American children (Frankenberg et al., 2003) or as social outgrowths of racist constructs (Gotham, 2002).

We discuss the findings of a study into experiences of school desegregation in the bi-state Kansas City region. Our aim is to build more nuanced understanding of school desegregation as it has been experienced by school community members. The context of the study reveals layers of truths and narratives of bad faith as schools in Kansas City, Missouri avoided the Supreme Court's *Brown* ruling to desegregate schools for almost 30 years until required through litigation. On the other side of the state line, students in Kansas City, Kansas attended integrated high schools until new state legislation enacted in 1905 led to the creation of Sumner High School, where Black students attended segregated schooling until court-mandated desegregation in 1978 (Peavler, 2005). What then followed was a period of education development in both Kansas Cities, where magnet schools were established to make up for years of inadequate funding and to entice White families to return to urban public schools (Thomas & Hoxworth, 1991).

We connect bad faith, ignorance, and selective memory to Mills' (2015) theorizing of "White ignorance" (p. 217), which he describes as "…an absence of belief, a false belief, a set of false beliefs" (p. 217) that is linked to the pervasiveness of Whiteness in our society. We also take into account the phenomenon of erasure (Mills, 2015), as a whitening and re-writing of

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history of past atrocities of domination, as has been seen with U.S. textbooks that silence white settler violence toward Native Americans and the "white washing of atrocities of slavery" (Bain, 2023, p. 25). Booth (2008) adds to our understanding of erasure and contends that memory in the United States is tinged with the forgetting of injustices of a past with its people trained to suppress a national memory of troublesome details.

We discuss themed findings that remind us of White ignorance energized by the epistemology of white supremacy (Bain, 2023). We also highlight our experiences with the Institutional Review Board as researchers of school desegregation. Social, educational, and political considerations may play a role in shaping the actual processes that are used to undertake research and validate knowledge. Hence, we explore the use of the lens of bad faith, ignorance, and selective memory to shed light on nuanced facets of school desegregation research while keeping in mind the interplay of White ignorance which can be "shared by nonwhites through a lessor or greater extent through social relations (including power relations…" (Bain, 2023, p. 20).

Literature Review

We explore literature surrounding the historical background of school desegregation in the two Kansas Cities in response to legislation and political concerns for schooling. Additionally, we highlight anti-blackness and Afropessimism as cultural and educational outgrowths of school desegregation impacting communities as a theoretical framework.

Historical Background of School Desegregation in the Two Kansas Cities

Kansas City, Missouri

Brown II (1955) followed *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), requiring districts to integrate "with all deliberate speed." However, the Kansas City, Missouri School District (KCMSD) used a neighborhood concept, Plan 6C (Gotham, 2002), to avoid desegregation of schools for three decades after *Brown*. The *Jenkins v. Missouri* (1984) case began in 1977, and with follow-up appeals over 18 years, ended in 1995 with a U.S. Supreme Court decision that communicated the failure to integrate schools (Gotham, 2002; Orfield & Lee, 2006).

School desegregation in KCMSD began long before the *Jenkins* case, with Black children subjected to the state's intentional creation of a segregated school system through discriminatory housing policies and practices resulting from highway projects, urban development, racially restrictive covenants in suburban communities, and inequity of resources (Beck, 1993; Gotham 2002). The remedy included providing transportation funding for suburban White children to voluntarily transfer to newly renovated KCMSD magnet-themed schools (Thomas & Hoxworth, 1991). Ultimately, $2 billion were spent and the plan failed to achieve racial integration in Kansas City, Missouri schools (Gotham, 2002; Mawdsley, 2004).

Kansas City, Kansas

Prior to 1904, Black and White students in Kansas attended high school together due to a state law that required integrated high schools, though elementary schools were segregated (Groundwork NRG, 2022). There was a push to build a new high school for Black students following the death of a White student who was shot by an 18-year-old Black employee of a meat packing plant who did not attend the school. White legislators and residents succeeded in their campaign for a segregated high school when, despite promises of equality to his Black constituents, Governor Hoch signed a bill into law in 1905. He condemned his own act as "a great step backwards" (p. 190) in race relations (Peavler, 2005). Sumner High School was established as the only legally segregated high school in Kansas in 1906, and it remained segregated until it was integrated as a magnet school in 1978.

The decision to close Sumner High School and open the building as an Academy of Arts and Sciences magnet school resulted from a class action lawsuit, *Downs v. Board of Education of Kansas City* (1964), which was filed by 15 students and their families. The Court ruled that the Black district schools must be integrated, and the district plan placed the burden on Black students, residing in predominantly one-race neighborhoods, to transfer to schools where they were in the minority. The magnet school concept was intended to attract White students to the previously all-Black school.

Resegregation of Schools

Today, the two Kansas City districts are predominantly Black and Latine, mirroring the failure of school desegregation across the nation. The Black editors of a local Wyandotte county, Kansas newspaper, the *Plaindealer*, cited the efforts to integrate schools as a form of anti-blackness that was analogous to chattel slavery (Foner, 1995). The second opinion delivered by the courts, *Brown II* with "all deliberate speed" (349 U.S. 294,1955), was conceived by states as moving slowly to desegregate schools with forms of resistance consisting of denial of funds for equalization, White flight, and the lack of support by the courts for the principles of *Brown* (Chen, 2006; Ogletree, 2004). Morris (2008) purports that *Brown* was not implemented until 15 years after the ruling, and the process is incomplete; the U.S. Department of Justice shows dozens of active desegregation cases and failures (Inglis, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

Anti-blackness and Afropessimism

This study was guided by the theories of anti-blackness, regarded as bad faith (Beckless-Raymond, 2020), and tenets of Afropessimism to explain institutional racism, where "White supremacy is maintained and perpetuated through the 'management of memory'" (p. 172). Foner (1995) underscored that the persistence of racial attitudes akin to anti-blackness are not altered once people change geographical spaces. Hartman (1997) stimulated the theorizing of Black scholars engaged in untangling the complexity of race and pointed to ways anti-blackness is situated in everyday life rather than through spectacular violence (Dumas, 2016; Dumas & ross, 2016; ross, 2020a; Weier, 2014). This recent scholarship expands the contours of Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and portends CRT does not go far enough to interrogate antiblackness nor does it have the language to articulate the counter stories of anti-blackness and how it constructs the lives of Black people—"which is something different than White supremacy—informs and facilitates racist ideology and institutional practice" (Dumas & ross, p. 417).

Anti-blackness stemming from Afropessimism contributes to knowledge regarding sources of historical inequities for Black children. It includes discourses of bad faith, ignorance, and selective memory, as shaping an "epistemology of ignorance" (Sullivan & Tuana, 2007, p. 2). Black people are often considered as not human and "because—they tend not to understand the racist world in which they live, White people are able to fully benefit from its racial hierarchies, ontologies, and economies" (Sullivan & Tuana, 2007, p. 2). ross (2020b) provides an example of sub-human in line with Wilderson's (2016) notion that "Blackness is coterminous with slaveness" (p. II) and insists that "Black students are positioned as substudents, marked as inherently uneducable…." (p. 14). Anti-blackness in education ruminates in the afterlife of resegregation; "the ways in which despite the end of legal segregation of schooling, Black students remain systematically dehumanized and positioned as uneducable" (ross, 2020b, p. 48).

ross's (2020b) analysis can be depicted in poor academic outcomes for Black students, access to advanced classes and gifted education, suspension and expulsion rates, and over-representation in special education placement.

Black children attend largely segregated schools taught predominantly by White females, who may be likely to interact with Black students through an anti-blackness lens (NCES, 2020; Ross, 2020b). The experiences of Black males are characterized as "disposable in US society, considering police shootings, mass incarceration, disproportionate health disparities, and the continual struggle for access to quality education" (Carey, 2019, p. 371) with more than half suspended once each year in some districts (McIntosh et al., 2014).

Through bad faith, ignorance, and selective memory, the intent is to maintain the status quo as revealed in Booth's (2008) analysis of the color of memory with "whiteness as the invisible hand of official public memory" (Reyes, 2010, p. 2). Booth (2008) used the metaphor of "color of memory" from Ralph Ellison's (1995) *Invisible Man* to remind us that U.S. memory is tinged with the forgetting of injustices and suppressing a national memory of troublesome details, similar to Mills' (2015) commentary on White ignorance and the "erasure of an intellectual past"(p. 220) regarding silencing of historical memories. The invisible hand of "official public memory" (Reyes, 2010) shapes knowledge and ignores the local context in order to perpetuate traditional knowledge. We interrogate traditional forms of knowledge that have suppressed the memories of marginalized groups. The failure of both districts before school desegregation case to offer magnet schools as reform for Black children to expand education opportunities exemplifies the value of traditional knowledge. The re-segregation of schools in the present day is likely to also contribute to pessimistic views for the future of racial equity in schools and society. However, Reid-Brinkley posits, "afropessimism's utility in framing anti-blackness as the context from which students emerge into the world need not destroy the beauty of youthful hope, it can instead galvanize a different kind of hope …sustaining toward dreaming of new futures" (2021, p.101).

Warren (2021) offers a counternarrative to Hartman's (2007) blackness in the "afterlife of slavery," (p. 93) where mourning is a way to use the imagination, resilience, and tenacity to resist "racial terror" (p. 94), embracing mourning "as a launch pad to more fully understanding the depth and reach of Black people's *possibility*" (p. 92). We heard in the voices of the participants the tenacity to resist racial terror through a legacy of Black education with hope and possibilities for their lives. Most lived through the struggle of freedom, captured in the Civil Rights Movement, and their stories of empowerment and hope reflected the concept of Afrofuturism "to visualize future liberation" (Broyld, 2019, p. 170).

Methods

In June 2016, we began the first phase of this research, comprised of a two-year period in which we focused on the experiences of participants with school desegregation in Kansas City, Missouri. The second phase of this longitudinal inquiry was structured between June 2021 and June 2023. During the second phase of the investigation, we examined the experiences of participants with school desegregation in Kansas City, Kansas.

The research question that encompasses all stages of our investigation is: What would it take for schools and communities to collaborate around efforts to provide a racially integrated, equitable, and excellent education for all students in urban schools? We inquired into the following dimensions of experiences with school desegregation:

(1) Drawing on their experiences, what do educators, students, and community members: (a) want to share about their school integration experiences through images and narratives posted on an interactive, public website? (b) have to say about what is needed to change outcomes for students in today's urban public schools?

(2) In what ways can historical materials be made accessible to elucidate the period of school integration in Kansas City, Missouri?

(3) (3) How can online resources and educator workshops provide opportunities to focus on local regimes of truth with individuals constructing new knowledge forms related to equal educational opportunities?

Participants

We reached out to community members to request their participation in the study and/or suggest other parties who might have an interest in taking part in the study. Participants completed the general institutional media release and participants from the second study phase also completed Institutional Review Board (IRB)-approved informed consent forms.

During the first study phase, we met with 51 participants who were or who had been residents of Kansas City, Missouri during the period of school integration after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), as well as those who might have experienced the school desegregation efforts following the *Jenkins v. Missouri* case (1995). During the second phase of the study, we met with 15 participants who had been residents of Kansas City, Kansas during the periods of school integration and desegregation. All participants had been students, teachers, school administrators, parents, and/or community activists during the time period of school integration and/or desegregation, and many of the participants had experienced overlapping roles as curriculum stakeholders during that time period.

Data Collection

Participants completed a one-hour video-recorded interview centered on experiences with school desegregation, perceptions of how school desegregation was received by community members, beliefs about how school desegregation impacted schooling and community life, and ongoing hopes for equitable schooling. Interviews for the first phase of the study took place on campus. Transcriptions were composed by a paid transcriber. Interviews from the second phase of the study were recorded and transcribed through Zoom. We encouraged participants to share artifacts, which included photographs of schools and community landmarks, school yearbooks, and school district communications regarding school desegregation. Artifacts were scanned and returned to participants. Field notes were compiled after interviews.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Ethnograph 6 software (Seidel, 1984) to tease out the following six themes and related sub-themes across both inquiry phases: The theme of Desegregation Plan included the sub-themes of Integrate Schools; Traditional Schools; and Provisions of Plan. The theme of Community's Reactions to Desegregation was analyzed to contain the sub-themes of Impact on Community; Mixed Feelings; Parent Involvement; and Charter Schools. The theme of Lessons From a Contested Field comprised the sub-themes of Focus on Academic Outcomes; Reclaim Children; and Preparation and Recruitment. The theme of Views About Integration incorporated the sub-themes of Benefits and Mixed Achievement. The theme of Dangerous Memories of Institutional Racism included the sub-themes of Differential Treatment and Racial Attitudes. The theme of Generational Voices of School Desegregation arose in reviewing the themes across the participants from Kansas and Missouri while searching for meaning through historical temporal periods of school integration and school desegregation.

Public Education Goals

The goal of our project is to gain insight into experiences of school desegregation and provide a space for public voicing. We developed a project website, kcdeseg.com, where we posted the interview videos, photographs, scans of artifacts, and synthesis videos. The project website additionally contains lesson plans to facilitate study of school desegregation. We also added a Community Yearbook feature on the website to encourage generative dialogue.

We led community events on two occasions during and immediately after the first phase of our study. These events included screening our research synthesis films and discussion panels with participants who also were community leaders. The narratives shared during interviews and via discussion at these community events underscored how efforts to desegregate schools have led to present-day community fracturing and challenging educational inheritances.

Findings

Reviewing our data to utilize a lens of bad faith, ignorance, and selective memory sheds light on possible new interpretations, such as connections to the growing distrust our participants developed as a result of desegregation plans that failed to adequately achieve school desegregation or establish equitable schooling for African American students. Leon Brady was a music educator at Sumner High School who led a group of students to a music competition in Paris, France despite the district's attempts to prevent them from going to represent the United States in the area of music. Mr. Brady cited his own determination to make this happen: "Well, first it was stated that we wouldn't be going. They were gonna stop us from going. And I was determined that wouldn't have happened. We were going. Well, the superintendent naturally said that we weren't going" (Interview Transcription, Leon Brady). When asked to tell us more about the superintendent at that time period, Mr. Brady's response was "I would prefer not to." This answer seems to point out that even many years later memories and stories are curated with selective memory of bad faith displayed by those at the helm of top-down school desegregation efforts.

Some memories may be seen as dangerous in that they shed light on counter stories and raise questions of equity and the status quo. These selective memories may also unknowingly represent the power relations that Bain (2023) contends are shared with white ignorance. We recognized in several instances the potential of participants to perhaps unconsciously view segregation and their struggles with desegregation as positive due to power relations. Joanne Collins's story of early education prior to school desegregation, where schooling was based in her community and the teachers shared backgrounds with the students was silent about the pervasiveness of whiteness (Mills, 2015) that shaped segregated schooling.

> And then I walked to about ten blocks through a hallway to Southwest Boulevard to my elementary school, which was at a school named after Crispus Attucks. And that was, of course, when I was five years old. And I went to kindergarten through the sixth grade. And half of the teachers in my elementary school were from the neighborhood, general neighborhood of where I lived, and the other half of them lived over what we call over in Wyandotte County. And they either drove or rode the bus to school. But we walked to school and I had all Black teachers …. (Interview Transcription, Joanne Collins)

Our participants' storied experiences included narratives of shifts to the schooling landscape for children as a result of legal mandates. The stories told to us about schooling before and after school desegregation efforts showcased a stark contrast in terms of building bridges between home and school as well as generational voices of experienced differences. While Margueritte Peterson's experience following desegregation efforts did not raise the same racial issues as Joanne Collins, her story reflects subtle notions about how her parents' decisions resisted the pervasiveness of whiteness and legal mandates of school desegregation:

> I was in grade school, and there was an effort to bus kids from Stow Elementary School, which was the grade school I attended, to another grade school called Major Hudson because it was a majority White students and mine still was an all-Black school. …But my parents were opposed to me going to this other school, to being bussed to the Major Hudson school. And they actually took me out of grade school for a while and I

attended what they called Freedom School, because they were opposed to me being bussed to this other school, because in their minds there was no benefit. (Interview Transcription, Margueritte Peterson)

Her story reveals how her parents protested against bussing by placing her in Freedom School. Furthermore, the narratives of the community's perceptions of schooling quality prior to school desegregation were overwhelmingly positive among students from Kansas City, Kansas. Participants repeatedly discussed their experiences at Sumner High School, where most Black students in Kansas City, Kansas attended high school prior to its closure during school desegregation efforts. Mike Hobson, the Alumni President for the former Sumner High School, recalled the tremendous success of the school's music program and subsequent trip to Paris:

The parents and the community pooled together. And they raised money.... Sumner High School students, under-served young kids from the north end of Kansas City, Kansas, won the international jazz contest in Paris, France. (Interview Transcription, Mike Hobson)

Ronald Harland added a counter story of education that was top-tier at Sumner with highly educated scholars as teachers:

A few of them had Ph.D.'s. I mean, not too many high schools across the country had Ph.D.'s teaching subject matter in high school level, but we benefited from that. It's sad but true. But we had educated English teachers, math teachers. I mean, we had Masters and Ph.D.'s.... (Interview Transcription, Ronald Harland)

Steve Penn commented on how the quality of the education at Sumner High School could be measured by student achievements and stories of notable careers of graduates from Sumner High School:

And Sumner was always placing or winning at those sciences. So African-Americans achieved quite a lot despite intense segregation. And so, yes, we were under strict segregation rules. But despite that, Sumner itself still in almost every endeavor, especially sports and academics and science, mathematics, there was no slippage of test scores or student achievement in any of those areas. (Interview Transcription, Steve Penn)

A selective memory of school desegregation might focus on bussing as a successful means for enabling students to access a good education and further be nested in white ignorance by elite policymakers of the actual lived experiences of school desegregation for African American students. Our participants shared negative experiences of attending schools with all White teachers in faraway neighborhoods, and challenges for parents to visit schools due to time and expense for traveling using public transit.

We have outlined excerpts of narratives of Kansas City, Kansas participants' experiences with bad faith, ignorance, and selective memory that seemingly silenced the complexities of race that guided their lives before and after school desegregation. Significant to our experiences as researchers is to also focus on the research landscape by highlighting the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process as a possible shaping force for our project.

Influences of the Institutional Review Board

The lens of bad faith, ignorance, and selective memory helped us to reflect on how the context surrounding the study may have played a role in shaping our inquiry. The notions of bad faith, ignorance, and selective memory might have impacted our story of research as educational investigators searching for multiple truths in the midst of increasing discussion regarding race and social justice in academics and research. We highlight our experience with encountering the Institutional Review Board (IRB) as a possible barrier to getting to the truth and as a process that might unintentionally silence voices.

We described above our longitudinal research project, which is composed of two distinct research phases with identical research questions. A notable difference between the two stages of our investigations into experiences with school desegregation was that the first phase

focused on Kansas City, Missouri and the second stage concentrated on Kansas City, Kansas. For our initial research phase, the IRB informed us that our research was exempt as "not research," and we were encouraged to make use of the institutional media release form for consent to videotape participants during interviews that began in July 2016 instead of making use of consent forms.

In June 2021, we submitted the Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol requesting exempt status on the basis that we would not be collecting research. We had selected this option, since we were intending to conduct a study that would not lead to generalization, which was a criteria listed for determination of research. The IRB informed us that the interviews were to collect information on sensitive topics that could place participants at risk if their identities were revealed.

Our efforts to begin a new phase of our study focusing on the same research question as we had used in Kansas City, Missouri raised some potential institutional tensions that might exist when researching race within heated political climates, with the IRB process mediating ethics and privilege (Milne, 2005). Following completion of an IRB protocol for expedited review of research, we received review comments on the topic of "social risks" that we needed to consider providing resources to our participants in case they become emotionally distressed from sharing their experiences of school desegregation. We were requested to remove from our protocol a statement that participation in the investigation will benefit participants via sharing their narratives to improve education as this was not seen as a benefit of study participation. Finally, the IRB questioned the risks of including participants' faces on their filmed storytelling.

Following IRB feedback, we segmented our project into an educational research focus and a public education focus in order to both conduct research and upload participant videos to a public website. This splitting of our research project enabled us to receive IRB approval. Our story as qualitative researchers examining school desegregation was met with enhanced IRB attention and a more stringent review of our research protocol during the second phase of our study as compared to the initial research phase a few years before. We wondered whether bad faith, ignorance, and selective memory were connected with these differences across phases of a longitudinal project.

We also reflected that we had felt freer in the research protocol for the first study phase, when the IRB only required a media consent form for obtaining participant consent, than we did in the research protocol for the second study phase. In that latter phase of the study, the IRB required that we employ specific methods concerning consent procedures and that we divide our study in accordance with educational and research goals and outcomes. While our study did incorporate both educational and research components, we had previously approached these as fluid facets of the same study.

The changed protocol in the second study phase following IRB guidance regarding attaining participation consent also seemed to convey a different message to participants. In the earlier phase of our study, the focus of our investigation was about research and voicing the community members' experiences. The formal language about providing consent displayed to potential participants a set of rights and things to consider prior to agreeing to consent. We noticed how this formal consent process might have directly drawn participants' attention to the potential gravity of becoming a part of the study.

For example, during the first phase of our study, in 2016, we easily recruited participants through word of mouth suggestions. During the second research phase our calls for participants often were met with silence. Snowball sampling helped us to locate willing participants, who felt that they needed to tell their stories of school desegregation to get the truth out there. For example, Joanne Collins stated that:

> So if we if our parents and our grandparents would continue … to do a better job of providing these opportunities in good education, a well-rounded education and the true wisdom of our history, I think we could make a difference in the future. (Interview Transcription, Joanne Collins)

At the same time, she informed us that she met with us to talk about school desegregation despite her friends who had encouraged her to avoid being interviewed on the subject:

> *But you just chop out just whatever you can use or whatever, because I'll just respond to questions. It's been interesting that the questions you asked, and a couple of my friends wouldn't let me call their names about Kansas City.* (Interview Transcription, Joanne Collins)

It seemed as though the formal structures surrounding the study and its consent process might have not only tapped into ongoing contemporary political and societal dialogues around race. It also might have served to raise collective memories around research in Black communities. People seemingly were fearful to say what they really thought to us because we ourselves were constrained to make sure the protocol did specific things.

We thus highlight here how shifts in IRB requirements for this study may have led to perceived changes among participants regarding what it means for them to share their knowledge and experiences with us and with a greater public audience. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) in universities has been established in order to oversee and support ethical conduct in research (The Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative, 2023), including risk minimization and protecting rights among participants. However, the IRB has been criticized for overreaching its authority with the effect of hindering certain areas of study (Nichols, 2015). For example, Milne (2005) argues that IRBs may support and restrict certain kinds of research. Pitt (2014) questions the degree of fit between the structures in place for ethical research determination and research dealing with human relationships. In turn, Barton et al. (2018) assert that community members play a role in making decisions about ethical research. They argue that this is especially necessary for ensuring that research accounts for the voices, needs, risks, and benefits of members of minoritized communities. They recommend attending to African American community members' voices, which were discussed as silenced in decision-making about research ethics. Furthermore, Jackson et al. (2022) underscore how IRBs may determine oral history investigations to be labeled as "not research," thereby disenfranchising traditional forms of knowledge among Indigenous people and among Black and Latinx people within the official knowledge validation process.

Using the lens of bad faith, ignorance, and selective memory, we considered how our inquiry might be positioned within some of the heated political debates on Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) in society and education. As an investigation pertaining to race and anti-blackness (Dumas, 2016), our study connects to broader social movements, such as the Black Lives Matter movement (2013). The recent political climate that has cast new light and new divisions on race, racism, and anti-racism (Hanshaw, 2023) may have led to our study being flagged by the IRB as requiring special care as a potentially hot-button topic.

If we place our faith in the IRB as a body that is looking out for the pursuit of truth and information, the perception of nuances of doing work in the area of diversity or school desegregation might indirectly serve to silence people - both researcher and participant alike. The IRB process thus has the potential to create selective memories in the public. While the IRB process may only be one factor shaping a shift in participant eagerness to share their stories, this phenomenon connects with what Booth (2008) labeled as the "color of memory," whereby society participates in selective memory

regarding racial injustices as a means of suppressing those experiences.

Discussion

We used the lens of bad faith, ignorance, and selective memory to outline some of the truths of school desegregation as they are held by Kansas City, Kansas participants who seemed to be hesitant to deconstruct the "dangerous memories" (Caruthers & Smith, 2006) of race and education in the United States. Although scholars have more recently begun a discourse surrounding anti-blackness (Dumas, 2016; Dumas & ross, 2016; ross, 2020a; 2020b; Wilderson, 2016), the anti-black sentiments among participants in Kansas City Public Schools (KCPS) were apparent in school desegregation. Kansas City, Kansas participants were silent about anti-blackness; however underneath their narratives was the public memory of race which signaled bad faith, ignorance, and selective memory.

Our interpretations indicated participants tended to glorify the segregation of schools and presented generally positive descriptions of schooling prior to school desegregation and the closing of Sumner High School. Their silence about the pervasive nature of anti-blackness in the United States extends beyond the Black and White binary of CRT (Dumas & ross 2016) in contemporary life, and it may be rooted in experiences of bad faith, ignorance, and selective memory. We see this in Joanne Collins' memory of going to school in Kansas City, Kansas prior to *Brown* when she was able to walk to school in her neighborhood that had all Black teachers. Underneath her story is silence about race that indicates a "broader antagonistic relationship between blackness and (the possibility of) humanity" (Dumas, 2016, p. 429) that contributed to segregated schools.

Attending to the context of school desegregation further serves to illuminate truths. Our participants from Kansas City, Kansas, seemingly hesitant to illuminate anti-blackness, shared common themes related to their experiences with school desegregation. Focusing on the specific state context enables deliberation over the nuanced experiences and effects of the school desegregation efforts that were put into place from the vantage of curriculum stakeholders. These narratives surrounding school desegregation in the Kansas City, Kansas region are seemingly structured around the idea of an historical resistance to change amid a desire for educational equity (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954) with selective memories of segregation that are overwhelmingly positive.

Limitations

A possible limitation of this study is that it does not aim to produce generalizable knowledge. Instead, this qualitative inquiry focused on trustworthiness and plausibility among data. Including our participants' oral histories may have impacted our collected data in two ways. Firstly, participants were aware that their stories were recorded and that they would be uploaded to a publicly accessible website. This might have helped to ensure that they relayed truthful stories to us. At the same time, participants may have chosen not to disclose certain stories due to the public nature of the project.

Another potential limitation of this investigation is that it concerns events that are historical in nature. Our data thus capture memories of experiences, which may include mis-remembered facts or forgotten aspects of experiences. Our project has amassed approximately 70 oral histories, and so the sheer number of stories told can help to bolster the plausibility of the remembered details of stories.

Educational Significance

This inquiry amplifies experiences of school desegregation in the Kansas City region. The context is historically noteworthy, since they are two urban school districts within different states that each preserved segregated schools for 25 to 30 years following *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Social interactions regarding race and

housing policies reinforced ongoing de facto racial residential segregation, shaping inherited experiences of life and schooling across the two Kansas Cities. This study thus shares truths of education in the United States that are not often examined.

We further shed light on our experiences as researchers, focusing on the research landscape as a possible shaping force for knowledge and the knowledge validation process. The information shared in this study contributes to the literature on school desegregation. If truth is indeed in the eye of the beholder, there may be a need to cast many eyes on school desegregation to uncover dimensions of truth and its enduring influences on students and on communities surrounding schools. This may include a contextualized analysis of the context shaping, influencing, and/or guiding research and knowledge within academic arenas as well as within society. Further research into the possible interplay between shifting societal vantages on issues of diversity and attitudes toward research areas of interest may prove to be illuminating for researchers.

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Indigenous Assimilation and Progressive Mirages: The Globalization of American Narratives of Educational Reform

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In a darkened room in Montevideo, Uruguay, a packed room of people in business wear gathered for the formal launch of the 2023 UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM Report UNESCO, 2023). This year's theme was technology in education, including its incredible potential and the frightening dangers. "No screen will ever replace a teacher," the Director-General, Audrey Azoulay declared in a pre-recorded video. A parade of dignitaries, ministers, and officials marched across the wide stage bathed in baby blue light, delivering speeches, sitting on panels, and showing videos, all as the audience celebrated.

Almost 100 years earlier, the Institute for Government Research released the Meriam Report in 1928, a massive study of Indigenous people in the United States. Unflinchingly rational, the report criticized federal policy, but it also set a high-minded vision for progress. Celebrated in the press and hailed by historians in the following decades (Bertolet, 2007; Szasz, 1999; Philp, 1977; Downes, 1945), the report became perceived as a turning point in the education of Indigenous children and signaled a renewed faith in government.

These two reports bookend almost a century of worldwide expansion in the institution of schooling. In this paper I examine how a singular type of artifact, official reports calling for educational reform, are symbolic messengers carrying the unique colonial message of progress and assimilation through education. The Meriam Report was notable for bringing a technical and rational bureaucratic administration to the education of Indigenous[17] children. The Global Monitoring Report (GEM) continues that same spirit of stimulating progress for children on the margins of education, this time on a global scale.

Seeing the two reports together against the backdrop of an increasingly homogeneous world culture of schooling shows how a settler colonial idea of assimilation through education has been globalized. We live in a world with a near-uniform grammar of schooling, a flattened educational landscape where millions of students learn the same topics in the same way with the same tools. This educational uniformity first found success in its imposition on Indigenous populations around the world and has since reinforced a fundamental dynamic of the colonial project (Swartz, 2019; Silova & Brehm, 2015), pioneered in the United States where the government promised to make Indigenous culture almost, but never quite fully, the same as dominant society (Bhabha, 2012; Deloria, 2004). This is an analysis of education policy as written by dominant elites; though the subject of these efforts are Indigenous communities and marginalized populations of largely developing countries, their voices are largely absent. Still, Indigenous scholars have laid the ideological bedrock challenging the legitimacy of official narratives, largely by describing the discursive backgrounds that create fields within which it is possible to construct education as a project of reforming the Other (Bird, 2018; Brown, 2017; Deloria, 2004; Seth, 2007).

[17] I use the word "Indigenous" in reference to Indigenous populations of the present-day United States. This is an imperfect term, and there are many other labels to be used, each with their own advantages and shortcomings. I reproduce "Indian" when quoting sources or titles (Smithsonian Institution, 2023).

Such reports are not the purveyors of outright lies or blatant distortions of the truth, but they construct a narrative that is no less misleading. This resonant message of education as a powerful vehicle of progress cloaks the assimilationist impact of schooling, a dynamic echoing colonial projects of domination. My argument is grounded in a discourse analysis perspective that attends to the production, consumption, and use of language, which I'll describe in the following section. I'll next analyze the context and content of the Meriam Report, then turn to the 2023 GEM Report, a glossier product created by a different institution no longer tied to a single national power yet employing a similar discourse of assimilation. I'll close by comparing the two reports and showing how they are discursive creations; more than the text of the report alone, they are symbols that institutions craft to legitimize their existence and uphold a certain order through educational narratives.

A Discourse Analysis Perspective

I write from a perspective of discourse analysis that views language as dialectically related to social conditions (Fairclough, 2013a). That is, language is a product of the relationships and material conditions of society, reflecting differential positions in social hierarchies or degrees of power. But language can also be productive, actively creating subjectivities, social relationships, and perceptions of reality (Gee, 2014). Language, depending on how it is employed and interpreted, can influence our understanding of the world.

Discourse is more than language. The impact of written or spoken language extends beyond the actual words used, influenced by a collection of textual and extratextual factors that can all be considered discourse. Fairclough (2013a) describes discourse as a fluid process of social interaction of which text is but one element. One also must consider the conditions under which a text is produced and interpreted. The words and grammar of language are clearly important, but so too are the non-verbal elements, visual symbols, and surrounding context that shape how a text is interpreted. An elegant and heartfelt poem carries different meanings if read aloud at a ceremony or plastered on a street wall. The entire process from production to text to consumption comprises a set of discursive practices, though discourse can also refer to a singular instance of practices - for example discourses of accountability, religion, consumerism, or as I hope to show in this paper, assimilation and progress.

Discourses can also be considered linguistic manifestations of underlying ideologies (Purvis & Hunt, 1993). Identifying and describing the ideological underpinnings of discourse is what lends discourse analysis a critical bent (Rogers, 2004). Ideologies are systems of thought that lead to certain conventions and relationships being considered "common sense" or normal. It is related to power because in the absence of physical coercion, ideological systems can foster consent. Language plays a fundamental role in reproducing ideologies because it "presents the existing social relations as both natural and inevitable" (Purvis & Hunt, 1993, p. 478).

I'm making the contention that ideologies of progress and assimilation are prevalent in official educational reports. I use the Meriam Report and the 2023 GEM Report to illustrate how the origins of these discourses can be found in settler colonial educational efforts that have expanded globally. These are not divisive appeals that employ abrasive statements, inflammatory language, or brazen lies; but their formal tone and rational discourse nevertheless warrant critical attention.

The Meriam Report

The Meriam Report was published in 1928 and was a massive document, 857 pages of detailed findings, statistics, and policy recommendations. The very first page describes the Institute of Government Research (IGR), the agency contracted by the US Department of Interior to write the report, and goes on to list its officers

and trustees. The report opens with a gracious letter of introduction from Institute Director W.F. Willoughby, clearly marking the solution-oriented objective of the report:

> *The object of the Institute was not to say whether the Indian Service has done well with the funds at its disposal but rather to look to the future and insofar as possible to indicate what remains to be done to adjust the Indians to the prevailing civilization*. (p. vii)

This letter sets the tone for the report. Throughout the 1920s there was rising national concern about the treatment of Indigenous people. Conservatives had been influential for years in arguing that the government should cease all federal support, abolish reservations, and let Natives fend for themselves. They had already been successful in annexing millions of acres of Native American land and letting native schools wither away from poor funding, staffing, and neglect (Adams, 2020; Fear-Segal, 2007; De Jong, 2007; Philp, 1977). But momentum was increasing for reform, and the report was meant to generate evidence-based recommendations on how to improve the condition of the country's Indigenous peoples.

With sections devoted to economics, family life, and health, the report had many tangible impacts. In the following years, budgets were increased, a path (albeit a restricted one) was created for self-determination, and the practice of removing children from their families to attend distant federal boarding schools was severely curtailed (see Adams, 2020; Bertolet, 2007, Philp, 1977). Yet the fundamentally assimilative nature of these reforms is evident in this short quote from Willoughby's letter. A reminder of the superiority of White society is signaled by the use of the phrase "prevailing civilization," while Indigenous culture is clearly marked as substandard when positioned as an object in need of adjustment.

"The whole Indian problem is essentially an educational one," (Meriam, 1928, p. 348) the report states in the section on education, discursively elevating education as the key vehicle for such adjustment. It is in the discourse of education that ideologies of progress and assimilation can be clearly seen. The education section repeatedly calls for better teacher training, more stringent teacher qualifications, and clear learning standards. It forcefully recommends larger budgets and modern bureaucratic structures of management, all themes familiar to today's students of educational policy. These are the calls of a nascent educational institution expressing faith in its ability to lead change.

First, the report had to settle the question of the basic humanity of Indigenous people. In a section titled "Can the Indian be 'educated'?" it takes on common racist notions that Indigenous children were mentally deficient:

> *Whether certain Indian characteristics of today are racial or merely the natural result of experiences…it is the task of education to help the Indian, not by assuming that he is fundamentally different, but that he is a human being very much like the rest of us, with a cultural background quite worthwhile for its own sake and as a basis for changes needed in adjusting to modern life* (p. 354).

The existence of a class of "Indian characteristics" is identified as discretely different but at the same time "very much like the rest of us." It also upholds the white expertise as responsible to "help the Indian." And, as Indigenous communities are those who will be "adjusting to modern life," the superiority of white civilization is again reinforced. This passage shows a particularly colonial dynamic of demonstrating benevolence without extending full humanity to Indigenous others who are "a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha, 2012, pp. 122-126).

The report then takes on a variety of pressing educational issues causing deficiencies in learning, from poorly trained teachers to facilities in disrepair. One part details the need for using modern salary schedules, and another discusses

the importance of vocational curricula. In addressing these topics, the report employs a particular discursive structure. Here is one example from a passage concerning pedagogy:

> *The impression a visitor almost inevitably gets upon entering the classroom of an Indian school is that here is a survival of methods and schoolroom organization belonging …to a former period. The nailed-down desks, in rows; the old-type "recitation"; the unnatural formality between teacher and pupil, the use of mechanistic words and devices, as "class rise!," "class pass!"; the lack of enriching materials, such as reading books and out-of-doors material, all suggest a type of school-keeping that still exists, of course, but has been greatly modified in most modern school systems, if not abandoned altogether, as the result of what has been made known in the past twenty-five years about learning and behavior* (pp. 378-379).

The structure of this paragraph is one frequently used: an improper practice is first highlighted, then contrasted with modern standards. Here, obsolete teaching methods and materials "belonging…to a former period" are shown as lagging behind "most modern school systems." Native American education is depicted as a system of deficits that has not caught up with "what has been made known…about learning." The word 'modern' is used 52 times in the education section alone, a linguistic symbol of the new knowledge of human learning generated through science. The metaphor of progress is fully evoked where reservation schools are lagging behind the ascendant mainstream schools in their organization, supplies, and administration.

Through the one hundred pages of the education section, the Meriam Report repeats this structure. A problem is identified and contested with modern principles that point to a logical solution (Narayanan, 2023). The solution to the deficient education of Indigenous people is constructed as an identifiable and knowable problem, one that can be solved by bringing them into mainstream society. An American bureaucratic model of education was taking hold in the 1920s with increasingly standardized principles of modern management (Tyack, 1974). To be included in this move towards progress, Indigenous education had to follow the same scripts as those defining the mainstream bureaucratic educational structure (Bird, 2018; Brown, 2017). As the decades passed, this model was also replicated and exported worldwide (Meyer, 2009; Boli et al., 1985); though its origins aren't American alone, the idea of supporting flawed communities in meeting accepted standards would become globalized, a trend well exemplified in the GEM Report.

The 2023 Global Education Monitoring Report

The Global Education Monitoring (GEM) report is an entirely distinct experience than the Meriam Report, reflecting a century of evolution in the communication of official agencies. It employs new ways of sharing information, key points, and messages with the public, but also reflects how official messaging is consumed in the present era. In many ways, it is a different type of document: visually striking, colorful and full or eye-catching graphics, all tied together with harmoniously coherent fonts and headings. High-resolution pictures are placed alongside helpful text boxes and well-crafted data tables. Still, it remains a document that can be analyzed discursively, a product that reflects its unique system of production.

The cover shows a picture of a school age girl sitting at a common school desk, her chair connected to the table. Her head is in her hands and she is staring down at a bright tablet, a video poised to play. Behind her are two other boys at desks, similarly absorbed in their tablets. The title of the report is below: "Technology in education – A tool on whose terms?" Every chapter leads with a similar picture, usually a child centered in the frame with a dingy classroom in the background juxtaposed against some technological apparatus. One picture has a

girl in a robotics lab (UNESCO, 2023, p. 177), another is of a boy completing a workbook next to a transistor radio (p. 120), and yet another is of a teacher poised in front of a smartboard (pp. 107-108). The key points are clearly summarized at the beginning of each chapter in bold, neatly accompanied by sub-text in a lighter font.

A range of funders are listed alongside their logos, from national development agencies to private foundations (p. xii). There is IrishAid, the government of Monaco, and the Gates Foundation. The European Union is listed beside the Malala fund. The message is clear that this is an intergovernmental effort, a global community coming together in collaboration even as the funding represents a narrow swath of state and non-state actors.

There is also a list of all the previous reports published by UNESCO under the "Education for All" initiative, with titles such as *Education for All by 2015: Will we make it?*, *Is the world on track?*, and *Accountability in education: Meeting our commitments* (p. xii). These titles underscore the unifying purpose of the reports - that there is a set course for global educational progress, there are benchmarks along the way, and UNESCO has an important role in keeping those commitments.

The first section of the report is focused on the theme of technology. There is a clear and easy to follow summary followed by detailed chapters on topics such as governance, equity and inclusion, and digital skills. Each chapter is stocked with references, accompanied by helpful graphics. For example, a chapter on teaching and learning makes clear that little is known about the benefits of technology in learning: "Good, impartial evidence on the impact of education technology is in short supply" (p. 3). Private companies are called out for promoting much of the positive literature on the use of technology (p. 58). It makes the point that technology use needn't be fancy, and strong learning can accompany low tech tools. It then celebrates the innovations of private companies like Mindspark in India, Geekie in Brazil, ALEKS in US, and Google translate, before highlighting the potential of games, videos, and remote coaching (pp. 60-81).

Governance is the topic of another chapter. Few governments have the necessary administrative infrastructure devoted to supporting and monitoring technology use, the chapter claims, and private companies are allowed to have control over public data (pp. 60-81). It describes a global absence of laws around cyberbullying, digital privacy, or mobile device use, for example writing:

> *Despite the urgent need for it, national legislation has barely addressed data privacy and security in using technology in education…only 16% of countries guarantee data privacy in education with a law and 29% with a policy (the countries are mainly in Europe and Northern America).* (p. 149).

One chapter writes about the need for digital skills, where "more than half of countries do not have standards for digital skills" (p. 89). Media and data literacy are deemed to be insufficiently addressed in secondary education, particularly in developing countries. The rural-urban gap is highlighted, as is the lower digital literacy of children of parents who haven't completed high school.

Part one is thoughtful, nuanced, and written with care. It engages seriously with the questions and challenges of technology, helpfully describing important digital tradeoffs like those between personalization and social needs or commercial and public interests (pp. 23-24). But the section also carries a clear message that technology is here to stay, that private companies will continue to play an increasing role in education, and that strong governance is required. The report forcefully promotes the inclusion of digital literacy as a basic subject in school, hinting at the process of how the world settles on a common curricula and common laws of governance.

Part two refocuses on the central mission of the report, as reflected in the title "Monitoring education in the Sustainable Development Goals." This purpose is explained further:

> *…the GEM Report is providing a global update on progress towards the targets of universal access to education, the provision of key minimum inputs and the achievement of relevant learning outcomes* (p. 201).

This is stated with the nonthreatening phrase "global update," then underscored with the technical language of "key minimum inputs" and "relevant learning outcomes." Casting aside the complex and interesting theme of technology in education, the purpose is clear: to monitor global progress on established metrics. There are chapters on primary education, early childhood programs, equity, citizenship, facilities, and teachers. Well-designed graphics continue, except now they are focused on evaluating countries; for example, one evaluates a collection of countries based on how much physical playtime is given to students (p. 135).

But the most interesting part of the report is also the least text heavy: over ninety pages of statistical tables fill out the end of the document. This section is a compilation of a wide variety of measures compiled from countries. Educational data is tracked and reported in idiosyncratic ways around the globe, but the report standardizes this diversity and presents them in coherent well-organized tables. "Education data reported to the UIS are in conformity with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)" (p. 344), the report notes in the introduction to this section, followed by a series of footnotes, caveats, and qualifications. "UIS" represents the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, a separate unit of UNESCO whose main mission is the collection and compilation of data for reports like this.

Seven tables track progress on the different targets of the UN's Sustainable Development Goal concerning education. Table 1, wide like a centerfold and stretching across several pages, reported on "Education system characteristics and education expenditure." Table 3 presents a host of early childhood indicators of well-being such as "moderate or stunting rate", living with 3 or less books, developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being. Table 7 concerns characteristics of classroom teachers, including rates of training, qualifications, and attrition.

The chapter themes, the report's organization, the pages of tables, the clean presentation and eye-catching visuality, all signal competence, authority, and above all rationality. Throughout the language of standards and global community create a vision of a deeply interconnected world society committed to common goals, dancing around the complicated questions of national sovereignty and accountability. Rather than using force or political coercion to motivate collective action, the report makes a technical and rational appeal to nations by hinting who is "on track" or "meeting goals." "The GEM report is more than just a report" (p. 206), the document states, claiming instead to be about monitoring, resources, country specific feedback, and shared legal structures. Of course it is; the report is a symbol of progress grounded in standardization and measurement.

Progressive Myths & Assimilationist Narratives

On the surface, the GEM Report and the Meriam Report are two very different documents, divided by time, purpose, scale, and geographic focus. It is reasonable to question the overlap between a document about Indigenous education and one written a century later concerning the global monitoring of education efforts. In this section, I underscore how two distinct reports share common narratives of assimilation through education that are effectively cloaked in myths of progress and rationality. Benevolent mirages of education have discursive roots in the settler colonial project of the United States that have since carried over into a world educational culture that is increasingly homogenized and standardized.

Discourse analysis offers a perspective that can uncover such narratives by looking beyond the text to the discursive practices involved. This

involves analyzing how such documents are produced, the way language is used, and the processes and relationships that bring them into being. We must take such documents seriously because they are official artifacts. They don't traffic in lies or broad efforts at deception; they are instead masked in rationality and buried in the social conventions that craft stories from a shared collection of meanings. Discursive practices cloak the contingency of certain perspectives, thus normalizing the dynamics of power that lead to a given collection of ideas being taken for granted (Purvis & Hunt, 1993; Mumby, 2004).

First consider the similarities between the reports. Both reports share a comparable production. The Meriam Report was initiated when the US Secretary of Interior contracted the Institute for Government Research - later to become the Brookings Institute - to conduct a detailed funded survey carried out in "a thoroughly impartial and scientific spirit" (Bertolet, 2007, p. 117). Lewis Meriam, a former US Census statistician, was selected as the leader, and he insisted on hiring the most qualified experts. Several pages of the report are devoted to the credentials of his team. Carson Ryan, for example, was the author of the education section and had his bona fides listed in a dense block of text; he was a professor at Swarthmore, graduate of Harvard and Columbia, a veteran of many previous educational surveys, and had already held several advisory and editorial positions (Meriam, 1928, p. 84). For nine months beginning in October 1926, Meriam and his team traveled the Western United States conducting fieldwork on various reservations. Beginning in Norman, Oklahoma, they visited thirty different sites before ending the following May at the Rosebud agency in South Dakota. In the summer, the team drafted their reports, with Meriam editing their work in the Fall before publication in early 1928 (Parnam & Meriam, 1982).

The GEM Report also took approximately two years. It also involved a collection of experts, though this team was much larger. It drew on an advisory board, a team of background researchers, and various institutions of higher education that contributed researchers and reviewers. There was also a lengthy consultation process where others could provide comments and suggest revisions (UNESCO, 2023). Though the scale of participants is larger, the report is an immense collaborative product of a collection of experts gathered a wide range of evidence - in this case through UNESCO Institute of Statistics and additional background research - to be compiled in the report.

Another similarity is structural; both reports open with formal letters of introduction from agency leaders. The Meriam report includes a highly formal "Letter of Transmittal" from the director of the IGR, while the GEM Report opens with a Foreword from the Secretary General of UNESCO and a second forward from Dr. David Moinina Sengeh, the chair of the GEM Report Advisory Board. "I am therefore pleased to see the collaboration with partners…whose daily work is about the importance of evidence for decision-making" (p. ix) writes Dr. Sengeh, setting a tone of proactive evidence-based thinking. The Meriam Report similar opens with Dr. Willoughby writing "The object of the survey has not been to take sides for or against the Indian Office, but to endeavor through constructive criticism to aid insofar as possible in pointing the way toward marked improvement" (Meriam, 1928, p. ix).

Both reports speak the language of statistics to make their case. The Meriam is peppered with data tables that tabulate everything from per capita value of Indian property, tribal income, nurses per bed capacity, and the number of people living in a room together. The education section details the incomes of staff, school age child population data, and per pupil expenditures. In the GEMS report, page after page of neatly arranged columns constrain a matrix-like spread of numbers, all in a small font and listed under headings that stretch from margin to margin. Country names scroll down the left side of the page, organized by region, like

a museum collection of the world's schooling operation. These statistical tables are the center of gravity of the report, the concealed bulk that lends weight to its findings. Like the hidden back-office operations of a firm or powerful engine tucked under a hood, these numbers drive the report forward. Both reports, then, rely on numbers to essentialize the complicated work of education into a field of entities that can be easily compared and ranked, transforming statistics into symbols of a need for progress (Pettersson et al., 2016).

They also use the language of progress. As I showed above, the discursive structure of the Meriam report repeatedly followed a pattern of identifying a problem, contrasting it with modern principles, and presenting a logical solution to move on the path of progress towards modernity. In the GEMs report, progress is quite literally encoded into the Sustainable Development Goals. The very purpose of the report is to monitor improvements towards a collection of ends defined as progress by a global community of experts.

Most relevant for this paper, both papers use the language of assimilation. The Meriam Report is written around a discourse of bringing Native schools in line with modern standards of education. Every recommendation for improvement is really a call for Native children to be made into American citizens through the administrative machinery of American schooling. Likewise, whether the GEMs Report is cataloging qualified teachers, the presence of curriculum standards, or types of subjects taught, it is arguing that such practices are the way all nations should design policy. The Meriam Report advocated vocational training; the GEMs Report did the same with digital literacy. Both are furthering a particular vision of education normalized as the best and most appropriate for all.

Of course there are countless differences. These are two reports created in different times and with different mandates: one is an evaluation of an agency and its treatment of Indigenous people; the other is designed to monitor progress across diverse nations. Furthermore, the scope and scale are different; one is targeted at a specific nation-state, while the other seeks to influence an international community. But their discursive context and production share enough similarities to see that these documents put language into action to speak to the same type of audience: administrators and decision makers who are in a position to rationalize their efforts to lead assimilative institutional change.

Conclusion

It may seem unusual to have chosen these two particular reports out of the many that are released each year. Indeed, official policy reports from agencies, think tanks, governments, and other institutions have created their own voluminous type of discourse (Fairclough, 2013b; Taylor, 1997). There have been many such "official reports" on the state of Indigenous education (e.g., Newland, 2022; Special Subcommittee on Indian Education, 1969; Jackson, 1965), education in the United States in general (e.g., National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2023; Irwin et al, 2022; Gardner, 1983) and by intergovernmental organizations (e.g., UNESCO, 2022, World Bank, 2011). I have chosen to analyze and compare these two reports because they highlight a clear throughline of assimilative narratives from a settler colonial bureaucracy to their colonial echoes in current global education policy (Mundy & Manion, 2021). The Meriam Report was written at a time when an administrative machinery was consolidating around a standard model of education, while the GEM Report represents the latest in a multi-decade effort to achieve baseline global educational goals. In this conclusion, I describe one last similarity between the reports to illustrate the nature of their narratives, and their common context of responding to perceived educational crises with a drive for assimilation.

Perhaps where the two reports are most similar is in their shared genesis. The Meriam Report was written during a period of brutal

boarding schools, battles over compulsory schooling, and the expansion of mass public education (Adams, 2020). The outwardly racist ideologies that supported widespread neglect were losing ground to compassionate pleas for assimilation and to make Indigenous people suitable for existence in white civilization (Hoxie, 2001). The US government was assailed by humanitarians, civil society, and journalists to address the institutionalized corruption, theft, and violence that had defined the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Under pressure, the Secretary of the Interior sought to appease reformers by appointing a series of committees to study the issue, but the conservative forces hardwired into the federal government could only muster toothless plans with little commitment or desire for change (Prucha, 1995). Facing open revolt after years of unrelenting press coverage, the Interior Department commissioned an impartial outside agency to conduct a detailed and thorough study. This series of events led historian Donald Critchlow (1981) to write that the Meriam Report was less an act of goodwill or a symbol of progress but rather "defensive response of a government bureaucracy under attack from its own constituents" (p. 324).

The latest GEM report is also being published at a time of organizational crisis, in this case the declining relevance of intergovernmental agencies in leading educational change (Burnett, 2019; Heyneman, 2009). UNESCO in particular has been criticized for its poor leadership around the Sustainable Development Goal of education, obscure priorities, and inability to raise funds. The United States, for example, is a notably absent financial supporter and even discussing aid for UNESCO is politically impossible. Meanwhile, private actors and funders are arising to exert their own influence (Edwards et al., 2018), and an increasing amount of foreign aid is arranged bilaterally rather than through international organizations (Mundy, 2016). In this context the GEMs Report is the flagship of UNESCO's efforts to be taken seriously in the global community (Edwards et al., 2018).

Both the Meriam Report and the GEMs report share so many interesting characteristics because they represent organizations seeking to maintain their legitimacy. The texts, with their heavy reliance on statistics and consciously deliberate production, are necessary for institutions to show doubters that they have an authority that must be acknowledged. The value they bring is in transmitting reassurances of the righteousness of the global order. "The surprising features of the contemporary world are: how much is shared, how much is universalized," writes sociologist John Meyer (2009, p. 37). The discursive practice of reports such as these are vital in symbolically legitimizing education as a hallmark of global homogeneity. These are not documents to be read but rather referenced, meant to reinforce soothing narratives of the legitimacy of assimilative practices. Whether expanding the school bureaucracy to Indigenous students or extending Western schooling to developing countries, the myths of progress through assimilation are central because they reaffirm the social and economic status of dominant cultures, providing a narrative shape that rationalizes an unequal world.

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